THE TRIUMPH OF TIM

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

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By HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

NOVELS

THE TRIUMPH OF TIM
SPRAGGE'S CANYON
QUINNEYS'
LOOT
BLINDS DOWN
JOHN VERNEY
THE OTHER SIDE

PLAYS

QUINNEYS'
SEARCHLIGHTS
JELF'S

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY
NEW YORK

THE TRIUMPH OF TIM

BY

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

AUTHOR OF "QUINNEYS'," "BLINDS DOWN," "JELF'S," "JOHN VERNEY," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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TO MY UNCLE AND GODFATHER

ARTHUR LYTTELTON-ANNESLEY

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

2133477

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BOOK ONE: WHITE

"To attain knowledge, strength, wisdom, to know life and folly and disaster and triumph—these are the things, this is youth, this is the food for the heart, for the spirit. To attain these all sacrifice is good, is splendid; is not sacrifice at all, but a gift rather, a great gift. To do, to be, to grow, to put out roots into the world and suck nutriment from the living rock and living soil! There is naught else, children of the sea, of the Island, of the land encompassed by the Father of Waters!"

MORLEY ROBERTS, in "Flying Cloud."

BOOK ONE: WHITE

CHAPTER I

THE VICAR OF LITTLE PENNINGTON

I

THE Vicar's name was White. In Little Pennington, however, everybody spoke of him reverentially as the Vicar. He had succeeded a famous man, a poet and a prophet to whose grave in Little Pennington churchyard pilgrims from overseas still bring themselves and votive wreaths. Tertius White was neither poet nor prophet. He would have made an admirable man of business, a great solicitor or administrator, because essentially he was interested in the affairs of others. He never sought preferment, reigning quietly over a Hampshire parish bordered on the east by breezy, high-lying downs; on the west and north by vast woods.

He was thirty-five, when he made a romantic marriage, running away with the only daughter of an Irish peer, an elopement which created something of a scandal at the time, for the father was furious and swore that he would never acknowledge the runaways. Nor did he. But he sent after them a portrait of his daughter painted by Pynsent before he achieved fame, a portrait which hung in the parson's study above the fireplace, challenging attention because it seemed preposterously out of tune with the ordered harmony of that historical workshop. Here his predecessor had laboured for more than a quarter of a century. The pilgrims regarded it as a shrine, because it contained the desk, the chair and the bookcases of the poet. Its

austere simplicity impressed all visitors. There were many books in plain bindings, a few engravings of sacred subjects, cocoanut matting upon the floor, three Windsor chairs, and a large window through which could be seen a high, carefully-trimmed yew hedge and above it, soaring into the soft skies, the spire of the village church. The big desk faced this window, and the pilgrims always understood the significance of the outlook, the symbolism of the high fence and the inexorable spire.

Behind the desk hung Mrs. White's portrait.

Some of the more sophisticated pilgrims may have wondered whether the parson deliberately worked with his back to the picture, now admitted to be a masterpiece. For Pynsent had painted more than a portrait. Tim's lovely mother, like Lionardo's Gioconda, stood smilingly representative of Woman, the dulce monstrum of the Early Fathers, the magnet which might lure men's souls to destruction. The face indicated great possibilities for good or evil. Half a dozen strokes of the brush could have made of it a saint or a sinner. Herein, of course, lay its attractiveness and interest. This radiant creature had bloomed delightfully. It was difficult to believe that she had died prematurely. One realised that she must still live in the person of her child, for life flamed in her eyes, the joy of life so fierce a passion to some, which must, one is constrained to believe, survive the disintegration of the body, an imperishable essence seeking other habitations.

Mrs. White died shortly after Tim was born; the Vicar never spoke of her, not even to Tim.

The boy respected this silence, although it informed his childhood with curiosity and mystery. The room in which the portrait hung became an inquisitorial chamber. In it Tim was called to account for his outgoings and ingoings and shortcomings. To his credit he told no lies, although much of the truth was sometimes suppressed. Generally his father would send for him after breakfast. His nurse would say:

"You are wanted, Master Tim, in your pa's study."

Invariably, the father would be seated at his desk, piled high with papers and pamphlets. Tim would seat himself on the hard edge of a Windsor chair, and wait till his sire, with exasperating deliberateness, laid down his pen. The Vicar, upon such occasions, spoke gently to the urchin in a voice singularly sweet but impersonal. As a child Tim vaguely realised that this calm, slow utterance was irresistible. Nobody presumed to argue with the Vicar when he adopted this tone, the tone of a wise and merciful judge. As a rule certain formalities were observed.

"Well, Tim, you are in mischief again?"

Very soon Tim learned that a simple "Yes," or a nod of a curly head, embarked him safely along the lines of least resistance.

"What are we going to do?"

This "we" was terribly disconcerting. It implied fellowship, the warming of a small heart's cockles, implying also a sense of responsibility. To get into mischief might be to a healthy boy a ha'penny matter; to drag a saintly father into the mud of petty peccadilloes became an odious affair, for the boy knew that the father would insist upon doing what the son might elect to leave undone. For example, Tim could remember the morning when he refused to apologise to an old woman in the village who had confiscated a cricket ball wandering too often into her cabbages. Tim avenged himself by catapulting a cucumber frame. Three marbles were found amongst the cucumbers, overwhelming proof that the misdemeanant was not a village boy, who would have used pebbles. The Vicar pointed a finger at the marbles.

"Ours," he said; for he had bought the marbles and given them to Tim.

"Yes," Tim replied.

"We must apologise."

"Sha'n't, daddy."

"I shall. Come with me."

Important work was abandoned immediately. Father and son marched down the village street, hand in hand, till the old woman's cottage was reached. The Vicar tapped at the door——

"May we come in?"

This was the regular formula, acknowledged by curtseys and smiles. The Vicar entered no cottage without permission.

"I am here to apologise on behalf of this young man. I make myself responsible for the damage he has done. I am sincerely sorry that he has caused you this annoyance."

"I'm not sorry," said Tim, boldly. "She bagged my ball."

"Did you?" asked the parson quietly.

"Yes, sir. I warned 'un again an' again. Seemin'ly, Master Tim thinks that cricket balls is manure for an old woman's cabbages an' cauliflowers."

"Keep the ball till he grows wiser. Good-day."

II

Tim was sent to the village school when he was eight years old. The squire of Little Pennington happened to be one of the last of England's country gentlemen. He had been the friend far more than the patron of Tertius White's predecessor, working shoulder to shoulder with him in the development of a great estate much impoverished by the mortgages which plastered it. Tim loved the old Squire, a genial autocrat in a high-collared blue coat, who welcomed a schoolboy as courteously as an ambassador. Great men came to Pennington Park, because their host was a distinguished scholar and Parliamentarian. Many wondered why he had abandoned the great world for Little Pennington. The position of Speaker of the House of Commons had been within his grasp. He refused that and other honours because his estate needed him. After his death a tenant said of him: "I had often occasion to ask Sir Gilbert

some particular favour. I can never remember his refusing me without giving me a perfectly adequate reason." This furnishes a glimpse of the man. He was an ardent Churchman and Tory. No Nonconformists, for instance, were to be found amongst his tenants; no Radicals disturbed the village peace. Wisely, or unwisely, this kindly autocrat imposed his convictions upon his own people. He had made sacrifices for them, and they knew it. He had swept away poverty and vice and ignorance from Little Pennington. He was a Tory in the sense of conserving religiously what he held to be worth conserving, but he was the first to champion the better education of the masses, and to provide out of his own pocket first-class teachers in his own schools. He encouraged cricket on Sundays; he gave his tenants free access to his park.

Tim was sent to the village school because Sir Gilbert Pennington had chosen the schoolmaster. Here again we have a significant instance of what example may achieve. The village dominie, Arthur Hazel, refused in his turn preferment, devoting life and energies to his scholars. The village doctor, fired by this altruism, remained staunch at his post. It seemed to be understood on all hands that there was work to do in Little Pennington worth the doing. The fame of the model village helped to sustain the standard set by squire and parson, and those under them. Even the gentlepeople in and about the village, the retired colonels and admirals and Indian commissioners were, so to speak, weeded out not so much by the squire or parson as by the force of public opinion. Undesirable tenants wandered in and out of this charmed circle. The right sort (in the Squire's eye) remained whether conscious or unconscious of their privilege. Little Pennington became known as "the happy village." Outsiders might—and did—scoff at the adjective. Insiders smiled complacently.

III

It is a curious fact that the unkindness, or indifference, or even cruelty, which is the lot of a new boy at genteel preparatory schools is almost unknown in our National Schools. The children in our villages and towns are, with rare exceptions, happy at school, and soon learn to like it. Tim enjoyed himself very well, and came to an understanding of his fellows, boys and girls, which endured when much else was forgotten. He had the knack of making friends, particularly with those older than himself, and ran in and out of half the cottages in the village. Moreover, he would call ceremoniously upon Sir Gilbert, and inform him gravely that a cottage roof was leaking. The old man listened to his prattle with twinkling eyes, and profited by it. For example, the great house was full of beautiful pictures. Tim adored beauty. He would stand entranced before a Gainsborough or a Reynolds and repeat his intention of becoming a painter of lovely women. One morning he found a blank space upon the wall of the north drawing-room.

"Where is the yellow lady?" he asked of Sir Gilbert.

The Squire answered him after his own fashion.

"She is building new cottages."

"When is she coming back, Sir Gilbert?"

"She will not come back."

Tim nodded.

"You have sold her?"

"Yes."

"How could you?"

"Come, come, who told me not so long ago that certain persons were thinking of emigrating to Canada, because there was not house-room for them?"

"Did you sell the yellow lady to keep the Panels here?"

"To keep them and others."

Tim weighed this conscientiously.

"It was fuggy for 'em," he admitted, "but villagers don't mind fug much. Do they know?"

"Certainly not; I rely upon your discretion not to tell them."

"I'd have kept the yellow lady," said Tim decidedly. "Canada is a jolly decent place. The Panels wanted to go, but, of course, in Little Pennington nobody does what they want, do they?"

Sir Gilbert smiled grimly.

"That is your honest opinion, eh?"

"They do what Father and you tell 'em to do. It's rather dull. When I grow up I shall try to please myself."

"I'm sorry."

"Why?"

"I'm sorry that I shall not be alive to hear from your own lips the results. Do you feel very dull in Little Pennington?"

"Only when I'm very extra good," said Tim, after a pause. "And you see, Sir Gilbert, I'm very seldom good."

"Original Sin!" murmured Sir Gilbert.

Alone with the Parson, the old man repeated this conversation, adding with a chuckle: "He is a rebel."

The father winced, sensible that Tim's revelation had been vouchsafed to another. The Squire continued genially: "I suppose it's the Irish in him. Forninst the Government. The Sheridan tincture—what?"

"Yes; he puzzles me." After a pause, the Vicar continued less calmly: "What a tragedy—this inability of one generation to understand another!"

Sir Gilbert laughed; and yet he had taken seriously enough the fences between himself and his sons, taken them, perhaps, in too big a stride. He pressed his companion's arm with his finely shaped fingers.

"A generation lies between us, White, and I am sure that you understand me and that I understand you."

'We are of the same generation. I believe that I was born old. I hardly remember being young. I mean by that

I cannot recall feeling exuberantly boyish. We were very poor; I had to make my way, to plot and plan for myself and others. I liked the struggle; I am not complaining; but—there it is. And my experience discolours my viewpoint of Tim. I never see Tim quite clearly."

"I do," said the Squire trenchantly. "What an attractive little sinner it is!"

"Too attractive," murmured the Vicar. "He gets what he wants too easily—particularly love and attention, quicksands both of them, unless a strong hand is on the helm."

"Our hands are not weak, White."

"They are growing daily weaker."

"Will he win this scholarship?"

"I think so."

Already, it had been settled that Tim's chance of being educated at a great public school depended on his wits. But Tertius White, who had won scholarships, knew that Tim might be crammed cunningly to pass a given examination; he could never develop into a scholar or be satisfied with a scholar's ambitions.

"And afterwards?"

The parson shrugged his shoulders.

"That lies on the lap of the gods, quite beyond my vision."

"Have you not a glimpse of him as a painter?"

"A painter? Any form of Art exacts a long apprenticeship. Tim loathes drudgery. He will rush at his future, leap into it without looking."

"We must do the looking."

"If he will let us."

IV

Tim was twelve when his future was thus discussed, a strong handsome boy, amazingly like his mother, who looked down upon him with a faintly derisive smile whenever he sat before the parson upon the hard stool of Penitence.

Tertius White consoled himself with the reflection that

the boy was really penitent—intermittently. He could take a caning from Arthur Hazel with tearless composure, but a deserved reproof from his father might provoke a passion of weeping. Then he would plunge into mischief again with an uplifted heart.

His resource confounded his elders. The Vicar read prayers before breakfast, and Tim was expected to present himself in parade order. If his appearance indicated imperfect ablutions, or undue haste in the putting on of garments, he was despatched to his bedroom again. One morning, the Vicar's suspicions were aroused, because Tim's forgetfulness of a hairbrush or a necktie seemed about to become chronic. Tim, moreover, exhibited disappointment when his father's critical eye failed to observe the deficiencies of his toilet. Tim knelt down with a frown upon his face. During Lent, the parson said lightly at breakfast:

"You wanted to cut prayers this morning."

Tim's face betrayed uneasiness.

"Last Wednesday you forgot your necktie; to-day you didn't brush your hair. Own up! Did you forget, or did you want to cut prayers?"

"I wanted to cut prayers."

"Why?"

"I do such a lot of praying."

"You have a lot to be thankful for. Do you grudge thanking me or Sir Gilbert when we give you a good time?"

"It doesn't take so long to thank you or Sir Gilbert."

"We don't do so much for you."

Tim rallied his wits; then he said triumphantly:

"You and Sir Gilbert just hate to be thanked too much. Sir Gilbert says, 'Tut, tut,' and you say, 'Run along.' I should think that God got tired of being thanked again and again. I know I should."

The Vicar said hastily:

"Well, well, you are hardly old enough to realise what

sincere prayer means, not to God himself, but to the one who prays."

"If you tell me, I'll try to understand."

Tim fixed his sparkling eyes upon the parson's face, leaning his head upon his hands in an attitude of profound attention. The Vicar accepted the challenge after a moment's hesitation.

"Why do we eat three or four times a day? Because we are hungry, because the body needs constant nourishment. It is the same with the soul, Tim. It cannot expand without prayer, which means far more than thanksgiving. It is very important that you should be grateful to God, for He has given much to you, and will require much from you. How will you pay Him back?"

"I don't know."

"By doing His will, by opening your heart, so that His Will may flow through it, and direct your life aright. Prayer, apart from thanksgiving, means communion with God, it means being with Him, it means walking and talking with Him. He comes when you want Him. And prayer brings God to earth, and exalts Man to Heaven. It is indeed the golden thread between earth and Heaven."

Tertius White spoke quietly, never taking his eyes from the boy's face. He could see that his words had produced an effect. Tim understood. He had forgotten his breakfast.

"Go on! Please go on!"

"I have said enough, Tim."

"Of course this just settles it."

"Settles—what, my boy?"

"I shall become a parson like you, because a parson does more praying than anybody else. I always wondered why you were so good, and often I've wondered why you looked so—so——"

"Yes?"

"So far away. You were with God. I shall not cut

prayers any more, daddy, and I'll make Ernest Judd pray with me."

"Amen!" said the Vicar.

Tim hastily finished his breakfast and disappeared. It happened to be Saturday, and a whole holiday. At the end of the village, hard by the Pound, Ernest Judd was waiting for Tim. A great expedition had been planned involving excitements, a breaking of the sacred law of trespass, and possible injury to life and limb, for the boys believed, or pretended to believe, that Lanterton Wood concealed man-traps! There was a real man-trap in the stable yard of Pennington House, a monstrous affair, enough to strike terror into the heart of the most daring poacher. Sir Gilbert was too humane a man to use man-traps, and his woods were open to Tim and Ernest. Really and truly, bird's-nesting was better in the Pennington woods, because the Squire cared little for game-preserving, and would not allow jays and kites and hawks to be shot by his keepers. But it would be senselessly dull to enter any domain from which trespassers were not rigidly excluded.

Tim walked the length of the village, slightly understudying his father's leisurely stride and general deportment. He greeted all and sundry with studied courtesy. At the grocer's he entered to buy a penn'orth of pear drops. The grocer sang in the choir, and grew a silky, apostolic beard. Tim admired him enormously.

"Marnin', Master Tim."

"Good-morning, Mr. Benner. How is Mrs. Benner?"

"No better, pore soul! nor likely to be this side o' the grave. Where be going, Master Tim?"

"That's a secret, Mr. Benner."

"Up to larks, I'll be bound."

"You are mistaken."

"What a queer little gentleman to be sure! Now, tell us what you be up to, and I'll give 'ee better weight."

Tim hesitated.

"You sing in the choir, Mr. Benner?"

"Ah! That I do, and have done this many a year."

"You pray?"

"Most upliftingly."

Tim said solemnly: quoting Sir Gilbert:

"I rely upon your discretion, Mr. Benner, not to repeat what I tell you. Ernest Judd and I are going to pass the day in prayer. Somebody else may join us. Good-day."

He walked sedately out of the shop, leaving a gaping and gasping grocer behind him.

V

Passing the Pennington Arms, which happens to be the last house in the village, Tim broke into a dog-trot. He passed swiftly the meadows where plovers' eggs might be found in early April and pulled up pantingly at the Pound. On the topmost rail Erny Judd was sitting, smoking a brown-paper cigarette.

"You be late," said Erny.

"I know, Journey, I've a lot to tell you."

Journey, a pleasing amalgam of Erny and Judd, nodded. He could boast, with rare veracity, that he had taught the Vicar's son to read. It happened in this wise. Tim was very backward in reading when he joined the village school, and Mr. Hazel had been duly prepared for this. He took Tim in hand, and became humorously sensible of the urchin's indifference and inattention. Whereupon, being a man of parts, he said curtly:

"I can't waste my valuable time with you, Tim. Ernest Judd will give you a lesson. Come here, Erny."

Tim's pride was outraged, but Hazel had understood what was needful. Tim made up his mind to reveal to Erny and his master powers of application hitherto latent. Erny's superiority as a reader of two syllable treatises was soon rolled in the dust. Nevertheless the boys remained friends, partly, perhaps, because Erny's father was recog-

nised and respected by scapegraces as a troublesome and incorrigible character. He had been a sailor before the mast, returning to the village blind of both eyes. He could sing a mellow song, tell many tales of sea and land, and carry more ale without showing it than any man in Little Pennington. He earned a few shillings a week by playing the fiddle; and his wife, a hard-working woman, was head laundry-maid at Pennington House.

"We ain't a going to no Lanterton Wood," began Tim. Alone with Journey, he used the village vernacular, abandoning it in serious moments.

"Why isn't us?" said Journey.

"Because we be two mis'able sinners. We be going to the Cathedral."

"The Cathedral? There ain't no nestesses in they beeches."

The Cathedral had been so named by the poet and prophet, a noble group of lofty beech trees in the heart of Pennington High Wood. From some such group Bradford and Ransam and William of Wykeham may have derived inspiration. The rounded trunks soared upwards till they met overhead in Nature's exquisite fan-vaulting. Beneath, the moss lay thick and verdant. Aisles, transepts and chancel were there awaiting the worshippers.

Tim carried a brown paper parcel tied with string. Journey stared at it interrogatively with a hungry expression. It might contain cake, apples and roly-poly pudding. His face fell when Tim extracted a not too clean nightgown and a yard of black riband.

Tim dropped the vernacular.

"I shall go into the vestry and put on my surplice. You kneel down and pray."

"I'll be danged if I do."

"Look here, Journey, something wonderful is going to happen, if you behave yourself. I'm expecting Somebody."

"Who be you expectin'?"

"God."

"Gosh!"

"You kneel down and pray. Open your sinful heart."

"'Tain't more sinful than yours."

"You kneel down, or I'll have to punch your head."

Journey dropped upon his knees. Tim retired behind a majestic tree. When he reappeared he was wearing his nightgown, and the black riband made a passable stole. Journey was much impressed, because Tim's face appeared to have changed. He looked angelic.

"Pray out loud," commanded Tim.

Journey shut his eyes and opened his mouth. Prayer did not come fluently to his lips, but he repeated a formula kept for special use at school-treats, when either Vicar or Squire might call suddenly upon any boy or girl to ask a blessing.

"For what we be goin' to receive may the Lard make us truly thankful!"

Tim stood in front of Journey, gazing into the intersecting boughs above. A squirrel caught his eye. Instinctively he glanced about him for some stick or stone to throw at it. Then he closed his eyes, and prayed in his turn:

"Come down, O God, and join us! You say that, Ernest Judd."

"Come down, O God, and join us."

Tim was trembling with excitement. Suddenly, he remembered a familiar passage in the Old Testament.

"Take off your boots," he commanded. "And socks."

Soon, they stood bare-footed upon the soft moss. Tim raised up his voice:

"Come down, O God, and talk. Our hearts are open."

They waited, blinking through the branches into the ethereal blue. Tim said impatiently:

"Ernest, son of Judd, your sinful heart is not open. If Evarannie Bunce were here——!"

Evarannie was the model girl of Little Pennington.

Journey, much troubled, conscious of innumerable misdeeds, said miserably:

"It don't feel open, Master Tim."

"You open it—quick!"

"I'm danged if I can."

"It's locked," said Tim, with conviction, "and you've lost the key. I'm sorry for you, Journey, but you must go and hide yourself. Leave me here alone."

"Ain't you afeard, Master Tim?"

"No," said Tim valiantly. "Take these pear drops. You can eat 'em all. I must fast as well as pray."

Journey took the pear drops and vanished. Looking back, he could see Tim upon his knees, gazing upwards. He heard a rustling of wings, and shivered. A glance into the tree-tops was reassuring; some wood pigeons were flying through the beeches. He hid himself in a clump of hollies, and waited with the patience of the Hampshire peasant.

VI

Tim prayed hard, repeating all the prayers he knew, and some that were extemporary. Finally, the conviction forced itself upon him that his heart, like Journey's, must be hermetically sealed. His thoughts strayed to Lanterton Wood, lingering beside a pond where dabchicks nested. with a vigorous mental effort he recalled these vagabond thoughts, dwelling with concentration upon the sinfulness of the Judds, father and son. If only Evarannie were beside him——!

At this moment temptation beset him. Was it possible to tell the truth to Journey? Journey, unhappily, lacked discretion. He would tell the other boys, and they would laugh riotously. In time the girls might giggle as Tim walked through the village street. Desperately he clutched at Compromise.

"Ernest Judd, come forth."

Journey emerged from the hollies with his mouth full of pear drops. Tim was standing up in an attitude which recalled the Vicar in the act of pronouncing the benediction.

"Kneel, thou son of Judd!"

Journey, quaking with fear, obeyed.

"I have talked to God," said Tim. This was true, and might save a lamentable situation.

"You seen Him, Master Tim?"

"Thou fool! Is He not invisible? I have talked to Him. I have asked Him to open your sinful heart."

"Thank ye, Master Tim."

"Tut, tut! Prayer is more than thanksgiving."

"What happened, Master Tim?"

"I looked up and saw light. I heard a rustling of many wings. . . ."

"Them was wood pigeons."

"Shush-h-h! We are standing on holy ground. All the sin has gone out of me. I stand white before the Lord."

"That be your name, Master Tim."

Tim was immensely struck by this.

"It's true; I had never, never thought of that. Journey, it's a sign. I shall be a Saint and perhaps a Martyr."

"Gosh, it sounds fine."

"You shall follow me into strange lands. We will baptise the heathen and——"

"Catch turtles."

"Shush-h-h! I shall be a bishop, and you——"

"Your man Friday."

"If you talk silly I shall take Evarannie instead of you. I want to get into your thick head that I'm going to save your soul, and open it up. I am going to be a good example to you, thou son of Judd. Thou shalt be clean even as I am."

"Yes, Master Tim."

"Say—Amen."

"Amen."

"You can rise from your knees. Do you feel holy?"

"I come all over queer when I seen you kneeling."

"That's holiness. I never felt holy before. Now I'm going to take off my surplice."

He slipped away, to return a minute later swinging a brown paper parcel. In silence the boys left the Cathedral, walking soberly side by side. Passing from the shade of the beeches into a sunny glade, Tim said suddenly:

"Any pear drops left?"

"Only two."

"Let's have 'em."

CHAPTER II

DAFFY

I

TIM did not remain sinless for any appreciable length of time, although that time lasted longer than was quite agreeable. For the remainder of the Lenten season, Journey and he vowed solemnly to give up biting their nails, but as Tim remarked: "Didn't we just make up for it on Sundays." From Journey's lips dropped highly coloured details of what had passed in the Cathedral. A few boys scoffed, notably George Chalk, who demanded proof of saintship. Tim rose to the occasion.

"Saints can perform miracles sometimes. Would it be a miracle if I licked you?"

George was of opinion that it might be *almost* a miracle. Tim licked him there and then in the presence of a dozen boys and girls, including Evarannie. Afterwards, the conqueror held a prayer meeting, and prayed magnanimously for the soul of George, who looked uncommonly sheepish. He was a head taller than Tim, but measured less round the chest.

Tim's correspondence with the S. P. G, and kindred societies must be briefly recorded. He obtained a list of such societies from his father, and then wrote boldly demanding pamphlets. The Vicar smiled when the pamphlets came. Tim read two of them aloud to Journey and Evarannie. Incidentally, he slacked at his work. The Vicar was pushing him on in Algebra and Latin Prose. When reproved for an exercise full of blunders, Tim said loftily: "The disciples were not scholars, but ignorant men. What good

will Latin and Algebra be to me when I'm a missionary?"

"Can the blind lead the blind?" replied his father. "Ignorance never converted ignorance. Write that out a hundred times."

Tim was impressed. Next day, he remarked to Ernest, son of Judd: "I'm going to work jolly hard, because ignorance never yet converted ignorance, and that, may be, is why I don't feel cocksure of having converted you."

Journey sighed heavily; he was a backslider from Saintship; and he knew it.

Two years passed. Mention has been made of the gentry living in and about Little Pennington. At each end of the village stood comfortable houses, encompassed by velvety lawns, whereon much croquet and tennis were played. Nearly every man, woman and child who dwelt within a two mile radius of Pennington Church was saturated with the Pennington tradition. It became a matter of pride that Penningtonians thought alike upon matters that counted. This Catholic assimilation of a standard set by two strong wise men produced agreeable results; but it had its disabilities for the young and ardent impatient of discipline and restraint.

About this time, some three months before his examination, Tim fell desperately in love. In the house known as the Sanctuary lived the widow of an East Indian dignitary and her three daughters. The two elder daughters were pleasant, unaffected girls, much given to good works and constant repetition of phrases taken from the lips of squire and parson. The youngest child, Daphne, promised to be a beauty with a will of her own.

Tim and she studied the French language under the tutelage of a French governess. Till now, the Vicar had no cause to regret his decision to keep Tim in the village and under his own eye. The boy was clever and strong beyond his years. It was reasonably certain that he would obtain a scholarship either at Eton or Winchester, preferably the former, because Winchester lay too close at hand.

And he would hold his own, and more than his own, in the playing fields as well as the schools. Originality had not been rubbed off by attrition with commonplace minds; yet none could call him prig. Had he been sent to a preparatory school he might have neglected his work, and focussed all energies upon games.

Daphne Carmichael—hereafter to be known as Daffy—was not Tim's first love. Emotional religion, as Salvationists are aware, stirs the human heart to joys described as "evingly" in an earthly sense. Evarannie, that tow-headed model of what little girls should strive to be, captivated Tim for a brief season. They promised to marry each other and live together in a tree situate somewhere in Polynesia. Like the excellent wife of the pastor in "Swiss Family Robinson," Evarannie promised, also, to provide a large bag in which everything necessary for arboreal comfort would be found. Unhappily, Evarannie lacked imagination. Tim found her dull company. Journey hazarded the conjecture that she was too good for Tim. Leaping hot-foot from effect to cause, Tim decided that dullness and goodness were twins, a conviction which discoloured appreciably his future. He passed, indeed, through many vicissitudes of fortune before he discovered for himself that really wicked people may be abominably dull, and vice versa.

Daffy was not dull. Tim had to bestir himself mentally to keep up with her in the matter of French irregular verbs. Daffy, let it be recorded with regret, purged Tim of all desire to become a missionary. This was partly the fault of Adam Judd, whose extended wanderings included the Cannibal Islands. He had talked with a Cannibal Chief! According to Adam Judd, cannibals preferred black meat to white, but he was positive that a plump young English woman was reckoned gastronomically to command the highest price per pound. Daffy was plump, and when Adam Judd in her presence affirmed that the calves of a young woman's legs were esteemed the greatest delicacy by Poly-

nesian gourmets, she declared her intention of marrying an M. F. H. instead of a missionary. To become an M. F. H. with as little delay as possible engrossed Tim's attention, firing him to sustained effort to win his scholarship. From Sir Gilbert he learned with dismay that it might be easier to become a Master of Arts than a Master of Fox Hounds. Sir Gilbert finished on a pessimistic note:

"I gave up the hounds, Tim, because I couldn't afford the expense. Four days a week, my boy, means four thousand a year."

"How sickening!" exclaimed Tim.

Daffy compromised matters when her lover repeated what the Squire had said. A Master of Arts sounded fine! She would bestow her hand and heart upon Tim when he took his degree.

Daffy, let it be noted, proposed marriage to Tim, but he kissed her first, in the Dell, a delightful wilderness at the back of Mrs. Carmichael's garden. This first kiss was a great adventure. Tim had kissed Evarannie, and played kissing games on the village green, but Daffy, of course, was a lady. Evarannie did not object to kissing, but she was too prim to kiss back. Kissing her unresponsive lips became terribly dreary work, and led, eventually, to a breaking of bonds. Daffy was much more alluring than Evarannie, and she had a little way with her, peculiarly her own. Tim felt in his bones that Daffy dared him to kiss her, and he prided himself that no "dare" passed him supinely by.

One blessed afternoon he saved her life. Daffy always affirmed this to be sober truth; and it may have been so. Sir Gilbert was entertaining the children of the gentry in his garden, wherein stood a Swiss cottage built of different woods grown upon the estate, the playhouse of his children and grandchildren. In the basement might be found a kitchen, with a real kitchener in it upon which could be cooked a four-course dinner. Cooking in the cottage was voted by Tim a bore, because neither Daffy nor he was

chosen as cook, that supreme office being ordained by the casting of lots. Tim said to his lady-love:

"Let's slip off to the ponds."

Daffy hesitated, because the ponds were out of bounds, but Tim prevailed. They crawled through the shrubbery, and reached the boathouse. It was locked!

"I can get in," said Tim. "You watch on, and do what I do."

He crawled along the bough of a tree which hung above the water. By swinging a bough, he just managed to get a leg upon the roof of the boathouse. Sliding down the roof, he dropped upon a small platform at the other end.

"Come on, Daff."

Daffy essayed the feat, but slipped as she swung upon the roof, sliding swiftly not on to the platform but into the water. Tim could not swim, but he jumped after her, grabbing her skirt. With the other hand he grasped a projecting bough.

Daffy burst into sobs when she found herself on dry land.

Tim reassured her. The gamekeeper's cottage was hard by. The gamekeeper's wife, his particular friend, would dry their clothes, and none be the wiser.

What he predicted came to pass. The truants were not missed. The gamekeeper's wife justified Tim's faith in her. Daffy, when taking leave of Tim, said solemnly:

"You saved my life."

That night Tim lay awake wondering whether he could claim a kiss. Next day they met in the Dell. In the Dell was a cave, also out of bounds, for the roof was falling in.

"Come into the cave," said Tim, boldly.

"Oh, Tim, we mustn't. It's dangerous."

"That's why we must. Do you think that Bilboa funked going into a cave?"

"Bill who, Tim?"

Tim spoke with enthusiasm of the discoverer of the Pacific, and then said:

"Come on."

Daffy "came on." They sat down at the farther end of the cave. Daffy, lately introduced to Marmion, and wanting perhaps to demonstrate to Tim that her own reading was becoming extended, remarked cheerfully:

"If the roof did fall in, I should be buried alive like Constance de Beverley. She was buried alive alone. It would be some comfort to have you, Tim."

The coquette nestled closer; in the dim light her pretty eyes sparkled. Tim made up his mind to kiss her, but felt ashamed of himself because he funked it. Daffy continued in her softest voice:

"You saved my life yesterday; and I lay awake thinking that you ought to have a medal. I've got my small gold locket for you instead."

"Oh, no, I couldn't."

"I shall hang it round your neck, and you will wear it under your jersey. Nobody will know. Here it is!"

"Daff, you are a darling!"

"Please don't be silly. I'm serious."

"As if any fellow could wear a locket. Look here, if the roof did fall in, I should save you somehow. I know I should."

"How?"

"I should bite a way out. It's real jam saving you. I almost wish the roof would fall in. I've half a mind to give a loud yell just to see what would happen."

"And get caught! How silly!"

"I am rather silly about you."

He slipped his arm round her waist. As he did so, she sighed. Then he kissed her. And she kissed him back, shyly but unmistakably. Somewhat to his surprise, she said with conviction:

"Now I'm yours."

She explained fluently what she meant. A kiss exchanged between young persons of opposite sex made marriage compulsory. Daffy, quoting her unkissed elder sisters, was

quite positive on this point. She continued with animation:

"Tim, you can kiss me again, if you want to. Isn't it funny to think that I shall be Daphne White one day? Really and truly you ought to have proposed before you kissed me, but it's all right now."

Tim blushed, thinking of Evarannie. Possibly, some unwritten law of the happy village might constrain him to lead her, instead of Daffy, to the altar. Later, he put the question tentatively to Journey, who somewhat startled him by asserting that village girls thought nothing of kissing. When Tim replied hotly that real ladies were different, Journey sniffed.

II

Tim passed his examination triumphantly, and became an Etonian. He became also a Tug, of which more will be said presently. For the moment he could think and talk of nothing except the bicycle which was solemnly presented to him by Sir Gilbert as a "diligentiæ præmium in colendis literis!"

In those prehistoric days, bicycles were anathema to many worthy persons. They had come "to stay," they were about to become fashionable, a craze, but at this time it was inconceivable that a woman should ride one.

The bicycle achieved a notable purpose. It enlarged tremendously a healthy boy's activities, trebling at least the radius of his peregrinations. Tim discovered Southampton and its famous docks, making the acquaintance of master mariners, and tasting rum and water for the first time. Many delightful hours were passed watching the great ships which sailed to and from the Brazils. He presented Daffy with a parrot, but she was not allowed to keep the bird, because it enjoined Mrs. Carmichael to go to a place never mentioned in Little Pennington outside the pulpit! Ultimately, the parrot found a permanent home with the Judds.

Adam Judd remarked sentimentally that listening to the pretty pet was almost as exhilarating as a voyage round the Horn.

For a season tramp fever consumed Tim, burning off the moss of Little Pennington, and sharpening the wits of a too home-keeping youth. He told Daffy that if marriage were denied him he would become an explorer. Richard Burton rose brilliantly above his horizon as a star of the first magnitude. Amongst the fusty folios and quartos of Sir Gilbert's library Tim unearthed that entrancing work: "Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffics and Discoveries of the English Nation, by Sea or Overland, to the most Remote and Distant Quarters of the Earth, at any time within the compass of 1500 Years," by Richard Hakluyt, prebendary of Westminster.

Upon the eve of his departure for Eton, some description of the boy must be attempted. Physically, he was as near perfect as may be, finely proportioned for strength and speed. His features were not too regular. Lips and nostrils finely modelled indicated sensibility. The chin was round rather than square; the forehead broad rather than high. Add to this, vivid colouring, eyes, set well apart, of a deep grey blue, shaded by short black lashes, sun and wind tanned cheeks, white even teeth, ruddy-brown curly hair, and the jolliest grin in the world. Everybody liked the boy, because he, in his turn, liked and was interested in everybody. The famous statue which Cabral made of him afterwards, a Discus Thrower, was bought by an American millionaire, and is less accessible than it deserves to be. Rodin, alone among sculptors, might have transferred to marble the freshness and alertness of the youth, his joy in himself, his joy in others, his incomparable grace so free from any taint of pose.

Sir Gilbert and the Vicar discussed together the propriety of speaking without reserve of what might await such a boy at a public school. Both men were Puritans in the best sense of that much abused word. Certain evils

to them were unmentionable. And the modern father, his son's pal, had not yet appeared in Little Pennington. Tim had been brought up in a model village, amongst clean-living, God-fearing people, whether gentle or simple. The twig, in fine, had been inclined aright. It was now a stout sapling firmly rooted in rich soil, likely to grow into a noble tree.

Thus Sir Gilbert, wise in his own generation, not so wise, perhaps, in dealing with another's.

The Vicar hesitated—and lost his opportunity.

Afterwards he realised, with poignant regret, that he had overestimated the influences of the happy village and underestimated Tim's character, chameleon-like in a readiness to absorb colour from its surroundings. He ought to have known that a healthy boy, bubbling with vitality, tremendously affected by personalities stronger than his own, is likely to turn from good to evil, merely because any change is thrillingly exciting. The Vicar had good reason to believe that Tim's upbringing justified itself. The urchin who slacked at Latin had become a painstaking scholar; the boy too selfish in pursuit of pleasure had developed into an affectionate and considerate son. Accordingly the Vicar decided to let well enough alone.

III

Tim returned from Eton, after his first half, not much changed outwardly, but somewhat reserved of speech, replying curtly to the questions put to him by Sir Gilbert and the Vicar. His affirmation that he was "all right" satisfied the Squire, who had answered his own father in the same words. The Vicar, however, had doubts on the subject.

To Daffy, under seal of secrecy, Tim unbosomed himself.

"Eton is a beastly place for Tugs. I loathe it. If I were an Oppidan it would be all right. It's no use jawing, I've

got to stick it, and make the best of it, but I tell you this, Daffy—a lot of fellows who call themselves English gentlemen are beastly cads. Some of 'em think me a cad because I'm a Tug."

Daffy was much distressed. She kissed him and consoled him, exhibiting herself in a new light as ministering angel. Her sympathy beguiled from Tim further details:

"They found out that I had been educated at a National School. That was real jam for them!"

"How perfectly hateful and miserable."

"It makes me wild with rage, but what's the use of that. It's part of our great and glorious public school system. We Tugs are jolly well made to understand that we're outsiders—and we *are!* We herd together like a flock of beastly rooks. We wear a filthy gown. Damn!"

"Tim!"

"I say—*damn!* Why, there are two brothers I know. One is a Tug and the other an Oppidan. The Tug is the elder, and he's clever as he can stick, and a nailer at games. His measly brother is a fat beast who spends his time stuffin' down méringues at Barnes's. This putrid little maggot cuts his own brother, because he's a Tug. There! Come on round the village. I want to get the taste of Eton out of my mouth."

"If you told the Vicar——?"

"Never! I can't tell him those sort of things. He is miles and miles above them. He went through it, but at Winchester, I'm told, it's not so bad. The Collegers put on a lot of side. I wish that I'd gone to Winchester, although they do get jolly well licked at cricket. Father paid for his own schooling. Something to be proud of, you'd think? Not a bit of it! We'll drop in on old Adam Judd. I do hope the parrot has not forgotten how to swear."

Long afterwards, Tim wondered sorrowfully whether Daffy's intuition had been right. Suppose he had told his father of the miseries that consumed him? But, then, such confidences were rare between sire and son. To-day, so it

is affirmed, things have changed at Eton. A Tug has a better time of it. We are writing of conditions thirty-five years ago. And the Vicar's office obscured the man. He and the Squire towered above the village, inaccessible peaks. There was no funicular railway up the Jungfrau, and no short cuts between parents and children, certainly not in Little Pennington, where the Olympians had the heights to themselves.

Within a week, Tim recovered his high spirits. The village acclaimed him as the Etonian, pouring balm upon lacerated tissues. Mrs. Carmichael asked him to dine, an unprecedented honour. He was expected to leave the dining-room with the ladies, but otherwise he spent a most agreeable evening, and heard himself toasted in a glass of port wine. Daffy was not present upon this memorable occasion.

IV

It was, perhaps, unfortunate that there were no young gentlemen of his own age in Little Pennington, that sanctuary for the middle-aged. Ferrets, however, proved a lively help in trouble. Sir Gilbert promised a twenty-bore gun at Christmas.

The Vicar spoke, with his usual reserves, of Tim's future. Tim listened with polite inattention. But he made it plain that he loathed musty quadrangles. No scholar's life for him. Ultimately, the Indian Civil Service with its high emoluments became conspicuous as the right career for a clever and penniless young man. Daffy's father had been a Commissioner. Mrs. Carmichael was quite sure that Tim could pass the stiffest exam. A chorus of ladies shrilled assent.

Tim submitted, although at the moment his fancy had swooped back upon painting as a more agreeable avenue to fame and fortune. He had the dangerous gift of caricature, and other talents which challenged attention and admira-

tion. He could pick out any tune upon the piano, vamping a passable accompaniment with his left hand. And he could act.

Admittedly an amusing young dog!

By this time Journey was apprenticed to the village saddler and smelled of leather. He told Tim that he hated his job, and talked gloomily of becoming a horse-soldier. Such talk was rank heresy, because soldiers were discredited in Little Pennington. Journey said to Tim:

"This ain't life, Master Tim."

Tim agreed, uneasily sensible that Journey, poor fellow, had wandered far from the happy village on the wings of his (Tim's) too perfervid imagination.

"What be you a goin' to do, Master Tim, after you've ha' done with schoolin'?"

"India, perhaps."

"I could come with 'ee."

"Journey, old cockalorum, I believe you'll have to stick it out here."

"I be ready to take the Queen's shilling first."

"Jump out of the pan into the fire. I've stuffed ideas into your poor old head. We had jolly dreams, Journey, but they were only dreams. You talk about life. What d'ye mean,—hay?"

Thus apostrophised in Tim's commanding tones, Journey blushed. He was older than Tim, and of coarser fibre, but the habit of obedience constrained him to answer:

"Lard love 'ee, Master Tim, you know better than I."

"I want to know what your notion of life is."

"'Tain't on all fours wi' what Parson preaches."

"I dare say not. You let yourself rip."

"A young upstandin' feller wants, seemin'ly, his bit o' fun."

"What fun?"

Journey wriggled.

"It's mothering Sunday here all the time. Made for the old folks, this village wur. 'Tain't possible, so vather

says, for a man to get properly drunk in Little Pennington."

Tim's gay laugh encouraged the would-be sinner to speak more plainly:

"I be thinking o' the wenches. Dassn't so much as wink at 'em in this holy place. Smokin' at street corners is mortial sin, too. I be fair aching for one jolly time."

"So am I," said Tim. "And I mean to have it, some day."

V

Three years later, he was hardly recognisable, having shot up suddenly into a young man. Eton accomplished her easy task. Tim happened to be handsomer and cleverer than the average Etonian; in other respects he conformed to type. Success at football and cricket brought him popularity; inevitably his work was neglected; and the Vicar frowned when he perused the reports. He said sternly:

"Do you realise what you owe to Eton?"

"Yes, I do," said Tim, with a derisive smile.

Sir Gilbert, however, was more indulgent. Even he, the scholar and sometime member for his University, was delighted at the prospect of Tim's playing at Lords. Tim pointed out that his place in the Eleven was by no means assured. He added: "Cricket is a tremendous grind."

"I shall come up, give a luncheon and so forth."

But Tim, alas, did not get his "Eleven." He explained matters frankly to Daffy, who was bitterly disappointed and indignant.

"It was blazing hot towards the end of June. I took things too easy. And between ourselves, the Captain, an Oppidan, jumped at the chance of keeping a Tug out. I've been a bit of a fool over this business. I shall be in right enough next year, if nothing happens."

"What could happen?"

"I might chuck it."

"Tim!"

"I'm pretty sick of Eton. Mum's the word. It's deadly to be a Tug. Eton expects that every Tug all day shall do his duty. The Oppidans have a slack time! Nobody expects anything of them."

He laughed scornfully. When Daffy remained silent he went on, even more explosively:

"I'm so fed up with trying to make good. Aren't you?"

"N-n-no."

"Being a girl you pretend. Luckily I can unbottle myself to you. I mean to make you see me as I am. Daff—I'm unregenerate. I hate this cut-and-dried business, this shoving of other people into pigeon-holes. I'm to be yanked into the Indian Civil, not because I've any aptitudes for governing Hindus, but because it means four hundred a year as a starter—and perks! There you are. Of course I want to steer myself. But I've 'nous' enough to face facts, even if I hate 'em. The Indian Civil means a tremendous lot. It includes *you.*"

Daffy was now fifteen, what is to-day called a flapper. She had remained Tim's constant friend and sweetheart. Many persons scoff at love as interpreted by the very young. How serious, what an influence for good or ill, it may really be, only the very young know, and powers of adequate expression are generally denied to them. Daphne Carmichael, not the Vicar, had kept pure Tim's ideas and ideals of women. She discovered this, and so did he, long, long afterwards.

"It includes you," he repeated, "and the things you care for, the things you are accustomed to, the things I should love to give you, but I feel all the same about the whole business that I'm tied, hand and foot, soul and body."

Daffy retorted with spirit:

"You need not feel tied to—me."

"Can't help that, Daff. I am. For your sake I toe the line, but I'm famishing for excitements."

"Something exciting has happened to us, Tim."

She had kept her great news for the right moment.

"What?"

"Mummie has come into some money. I think it's quite a lot. We are going to leave Little Pennington, and live in a place of our own."

"Heavens!"

"Of course you will come to stay."

"This is the abomination of desolation."

"It may mean a season in London for me."

"It will be awfully jolly for you; I'm a beast to think only of myself, but I can't imagine this dull old hole without you."

He spoke calmly, but an inflection in his voice made Daffy glance furtively into his eyes. They were dim with tears.

The long summer holidays passed too swiftly. Tim went back to Eton the week before Mrs. Carmichael left the Sanctuary. By this time everybody in Little Pennington knew that Daffy's mother had become a rich woman. The Vicar said to Tim:

"Those dear girls will be heiresses."

Tim's face hardened. He was thinking to himself: "I shan't be asked too often to stay with heiresses. Daffy will marry a swell. What a beastly place this world can be."

Just two months later, the Vicar walked slowly up the gradual slope between the Vicarage and Pennington House. His strong face looked pinched and drawn. As he walked he muttered to himself, almost senilely. As soon as Sir Gilbert saw him, at the moment when the butler was discreetly closing the door of the library, he exclaimed:

"My dear White, what has happened?"

The Vicar sank into a chair, saying brokenly:

"I have bad news, bad news."

"I am too old," said Sir Gilbert, "to be kept in suspense."

The Vicar nodded.

"Yes; yes; that is why I came at once. Tim has been expelled from Eton."

Sir Gilbert stared helplessly at his Grand Vizier, struck dumb by consternation and surprise. Tim was dearer to

the Squire than some of his own grandsons. He became fiercely incredulous.

"I'll swear that the dear lad has done nothing disgraceful."

"I have no details. He is in confinement. I have been sent for to fetch him home."

The Squire was eighty, and growing infirm, but he said with all his customary authority:

"I shall go with you."

But each knew that a small heaven had fallen about his ears. The Squire's sons had not been safeguarded like this boy. He was, indeed, the hope of the village, its brightest ornament, a gem cut and polished by two experts. The Vicar shivered:

"How cold it is!" he murmured.

CHAPTER III

IN THE HAPPY VILLAGE

I

DURING the dreary journey to London, Sir Gilbert was much moved by the Vicar's dejected silence. If it were safe to predicate anything concerning a friend of twenty-five years' standing, Sir Gilbert would have been prepared to wager a round sum that Tertius White was the last man to confront adversity save with fortitude and serenity. He found himself asking outright whether his old friend might be ill, but the Vicar assured him that that was not the case. Whereupon the Squire said with emphasis:

"You are taking this too hard, White. It is true that we have each of us sustained a shock, but I refuse to believe evil of your son."

He expected the Vicar to lift his heavy head, to hold out his hand, to acknowledge in some fashion a sincere tribute, spoken by a man not addicted to flowers of speech. To his amazement the Vicar remained silent.

"Rouse yourself," said the Squire, more sharply. "Possibly you may think that some word on your part might have prevented this. Your actions, my dear friend, have been more eloquent than any words."

"My mind is not dwelling on that. Don't press me! Be patient! I would tell you gladly all that is in my heart, but I cannot, I cannot. The burden is the heavier on that account."

"Very good, but I repeat what I said just now. Your son is incapable of a mean or dirty action."

But the Vicar made no sign.

At Eton, the head master, austerely gowned, received them. He was very gracious and kind, hastening to reassure an obviously stricken man:

"The facts are these: the boy is a fine young fellow, but he has broken the law, and gloried in it. Between ourselves we can speak of his offence as an escapade. He escaped from the College at night, and was caught, slightly intoxicated, in a not too reputable tavern."

"An adventurer!" suggested the Squire, attempting to minimise the matter.

Authority nodded portentously.

"One cannot make exceptions. I am sincerely sorry, for expulsion is a serious matter. I believe that love of excitement, nothing more, was at the root of this law-breaking. I will see to it, when the time comes, that the heavy punishment meted out to him does not imperil his future, provided, of course, that he behaves himself in the meantime."

"He will," said the Squire staunchly.

II

Tim returned to Little Pennington, and remained there. The Vicar spoke to him at length, not unkindly, nor reproachfully; but once more, with ever-increasing curiosity, Tim realised that the quiet voice was that of the priest rather than the man. Tim sat facing him, wondering why it was so difficult to believe that his own father was speaking. He glanced upward at the lovely face of his mother. She might have wept, or raved. It was inconceivable that she could have spoken impersonally. And yet, the Vicar's quiet words were intensely moving.

"Our acts our angels are. No man can escape from them. They remain to the end—fateful shadows."

He sighed, gazing not at Tim but at the spire soaring above the yew hedge. For the first time in his life, a sharp

doubt assailed the boy, penetrating to his marrow. A man may never be a hero to his valet, but he may achieve saintship in the eyes of his family. Tim had always revered his father as a saint, born with a halo growing brighter as the years passed. He wondered vaguely whether this quiet ascetic priest could have emerged white after scorching fires. Once more the name White engrossed his fancy. A smile flickered across his face. The Vicar saw it, and asked swiftly:

"Why do you smile at what I say?"

"I don't!" exclaimed Tim, really shocked at himself. He hastened to explain:

"I was thinking of our name. It does seem to impose itself. You have always been so white. When I am away from you I think of you in a surplice. But you are never unkind to sinners. Father," his voice shook a little, "I am so ashamed of the misery I have caused you; I know how you feel. I have been a beast."

"We will say no more," said the Vicar. "You must make a fresh start here."

"Here?"

"I cannot afford to send you to a crammer's. Fortunately, I have leisure to prepare you for this examination. Sir Gilbert will read some Greek with you. He is a ripe scholar."

"I'll work like a nigger," said Tim ardently.

"Good!"

Tim left the study with a very lively gratitude and relief, albeit uneasily conscious that others in the happy village might treat him less leniently. Alone in his own room, he wrote a letter to Daffy, which may be recorded as expressing adequately enough his feelings at the moment.

"Darling Daffy,

"I've been sacked from Eton. It's the very devil of a business. Father has behaved like a perfect brick. He is almost too perfect. I wish that he could have sworn

at me, or licked me. I slipped out of College at night, and was caught. I did it for a lark, because I was feeling deadly dull. I had some champagne, too, but I swear I wasn't drunk, Daff. You'll believe me, won't you? But it looked like it, because I laughed like a fool when they copped me. I couldn't help laughing at their solemn faces. Of course I had to go, but Sir Gilbert, dear old man, has told me that it won't interfere with my future. I am to cram for the Indian Civil at home; and I mean to work like blazes. There will be nothing else to do.

"Write and tell me that you are not utterly sick of me.

"Yours for ever and ever,

"TIM.

"P. S. I am sick of myself."

By the ill luck of things, Daphne happened to be away from home; and Mrs. Carmichael opened the letter. She was a masterful woman, saturated with certain ideas, which she held to be cardinal principles guiding aright her own life and the lives of others. One hesitates to indict this excellent lady. She acted, in what she chose to consider a grave emergency, according to her lights. Shall we speak of them as the best wax candles? More, she took solemn counsel with her elder daughters, dear good girls who had never caused a moment's anxiety. She might have reflected that Daphne, in character, temperament and appearance, was radically different from her sisters; but Mrs. Carmichael would have replied, not without heat, had such differences been indicated, that there was one standard of conduct for all young ladies to which they must conform.

A wiser woman, too, would have allowed her daughter to see Tim's letter. A sympathetic mother, also, might have read between the lines of that letter a genuine remorse, and a poignant appeal for forgiveness and tenderness. Mrs. Carmichael, however, beheld with affronted eyes a love-letter written by an impecunious young scapegrace to a child of fifteen, a prospective heiress, enshrined in her heart as the likeliest of three darlings to make a really satisfac-

tory marriage. She decided that such a billet was confirmation of love-passages kept secret from her. And she had boasted, poor woman! to other mothers that her daughters' minds and hearts were as limpid pools into which she gazed periodically, finding nothing there except what she had deposited herself.

"It has come to my knowledge," she said to Daphne, on her return home, "that there is an absurd, sentimental attachment between you and Timothy White. Don't deny it!"

"I shan't," said Daphne. "I love Tim, and he loves me. What of it?"

Mrs. Carmichael frowned.

"I beg you not to be pert. Young White has just been expelled from Eton."

"Expelled?" faltered Daffy, turning startled eyes upon her mother's face.

"Expelled," repeated Mrs. Carmichael grimly. "I need hardly point out to you, child though you are, that young men of eighteen are not expelled from a great public school for any ordinary offence. Young White has disgraced himself—and his friends."

"Oh!"

Daffy dissolved into tears.

"It can't be true, mother."

"Pray don't be silly. It *is* true. It is equally true that the young man has wild blood in his veins. His maternal grandfather was a disgraceful person. I can't discuss such matters with a young girl, but you may take it from me that the dear Vicar made a terrible mistake when he chose a wife out of a family that is a byword even in the West of Ireland."

Daffy dabbed at her eyes. Mrs. Carmichael continued, less trenchantly:

"I am willing to overlook a very grave deception on your part, because of your extreme youth and inexperience. I trusted young White, and I trusted you. It is ter-

rible to me that such trust and affection should have been taken advantage of."

Daffy retorted, not without spirit.

"I should have told you, but you would have said we were silly idiots."

"Quite true. Any lovemaking between immature young persons is very, very silly and wrong, inasmuch as it leads to wilful deceit. I admit Tim's charm. He charmed me. I have tried to mother that boy. His dear father has my sincerest sympathy and affection. More, I do not say that this unhappy young man may not live down this terrible disgrace, but it will take years of strenuous endeavour. I cannot have him here till he has in some measure expiated his offence. I shall write to him in the kindest spirit, and make that plain. And I ask you, on your word of honour, to promise me that you will not write to him."

"He may write to me."

"That is extremely unlikely."

"If he should——?"

"In that case I ask you to bring his letter to me. I have no wish to spy upon my daughter, but at your age I have the right to open your letters, and to deal with them as I see fit."

"I won't write to him unless he writes to me."

Daffy said this with greater confidence, because she was quite sure that Tim would write.

"Very good. Kiss me, my child, and believe me when I add that your welfare is dearer to me than anything else in the world. Dry your pretty eyes! This unhappy little experience will be fruitful of much good, if it makes you more careful in the future."

"But I still love Tim."

"Tch! Tch! If he is worthy of your affection and friendship, let him prove it. And don't prattle about love, which is a very sacred word. A modest little maid should speak with more restraint. Now, you can trot away."

III

What Tim suffered when Daffy did not reply to him may be imagined. His heart already softened began to harden again. It became even more indurated when he received Mrs. Carmichael's letter, after some ten days had elapsed—

"My dear Tim:—

"I take up my pen more in sorrow than in anger to reply to a letter which you wrote to Daphne, and which I am answering on her behalf. I have had a long talk with the dear child. She is, I think, fully aware of her wrong-doing and deceit in keeping from her own mother a sentimental attachment which you inspired in her. Daphne is a romantic little puss; and I have dealt tenderly with her. I desire, my dear boy, to deal as tenderly with you. Your saintly father has written to me a very sweet letter, which I shall always cherish. I share his grief and bitter disappointment. I share also his conviction that you will live down this disgrace, and rise upon it to higher things, justifying the affection we bear you. Hard work has sanctified his life, and I pray humbly that it may sanctify and ennoble yours. But I cannot altogether ignore the weakness and frailty of poor human nature. I must think of my dear little daughter first. And after what has passed between you—Daphne was quite frank with me—I should be lacking in my duty as a mother if I allowed you two young people to meet. I have Daphne's solemn promise not to write to you unless you write to her, and if you write she has pledged herself to bring your letter to me before she answers it. My faith in you, sorely tried as it has been, is still strong enough to justify my conviction that you will not write to my little maid, or attempt to see her against my expressed wish. Your father does not know—and I shall not tell him—of your attachment to Daphne. If he did, he would, you may be sure, exact some pledge from you. I prefer, instead, to leave the matter to your own

pride and good feeling. I look forward to the day when you can come again to us, and reinstate yourself in our hearts.

"Yours affectionately,
"ANNA CARMICHAEL."

Tim used bad language when he read and reread this epistle. Daffy—he leapt to this conclusion—was like other girls, cut to pattern, terrified by a tempest in a tea-pot, docile to Authority—a dear anæmic little puss!

He rushed hatless into Pennington High Wood.

It was a cheerless afternoon in late November. In the air hung an odour of decay; on the ground lay the rotting leaves; from the bleak branches overhead dripped the tears of a dying November.

Presently, he found himself in the Cathedral upon the spot where Journey and he had knelt together invoking Omnipotence to join them. Tim stood still, staring upwards with a derisive smile upon his white haggard face. Yes; he had believed that God would come down and talk with him.

And now?

A strange impulse surged within him to call upon the Devil! The Vicar believed in a personal Devil. And Tim, ever greedy of new and curious knowledge, had read something concerning the Diabolists.

Controlling the insane desire to invoke the Supreme Power of Evil, Tim flung himself upon the wet moss and burst into tears, bitter grinding sobs, the expression of all that he had suppressed during the past fortnight. Mightily relieved by this ebullition, he stood upright again, and confronted more calmly the situation, glancing to right and left in terror lest some passing woodman might have witnessed his weakness. Then he read Mrs. Carmichael's letter for the third time.

Anybody, save a dashing youth, would have questioned its cleverness and sincerity. Tim, however, accepted every

line in the spirit—so the writer would have said—in which it was penned. By his own act, he had cut himself off from Daphne and her people. They were very nice people; he knew that; and other really nice people—corroding thought!—would regard him, as the Carmichaels did, with slightly averted eyes. Sunday, with the residents of the village streaming out of morning church, had been a bleak experience. Nobody had cut him because, of course, he was his father's son, but each blameless worshipper had blinked, beholding him as the black sheep in a happy fold. Sir Gilbert had taken his arm, and leaned heavily upon it, subtly suggesting the appeal of age to youth. Sir Gilbert—God bless the old boy!—had done his best to whitewash his offence. Nevertheless, Tim stood discoloured in the eyes of the congregation, lending even a tinge of purple to the whiteness of his father's surplice. Adam Judd, who attended divine service from eleemosynary motives, chuckled as he passed a fellow sinner. Evarannie blushed, conscious of a too intimate lip-service with a backslider.

But Tim had brazened it out, carrying a high head, confident that his Daphne would not fail him, that she would know and understand.

Why, why had she not written to him herself?

He choked down humiliation together with some freshly rising sobs. There must be no more weeping; let him content himself with gnashing of teeth. But his dominant thought was that of wrath against ladies. He could forgive Evarannie for blushing; the demure, downcast glances of the gentlewomen infuriated. What humbugs and hypocrites they all were!

He wondered whether the Vicar had preached at him, dismissing such speculation as idle and unworthy. The theme of the Sunday morning's sermon happened to be Eternal Punishment, a doctrine quite irreconcilable with Tim's somewhat amorphous conceptions of Divine Love and Mercy. The Vicar could handle such themes with dexterity. He did not belong to the fire and brimstone school of or-

atory, but always he dwelt persistently upon the unbridgable gulfs between Heaven and Hell, the ineffable rapture of being with God, the everlasting torment of those cast out of His Presence.

As a boy Tim had conceived Heaven to be a sort of glorified Little Pennington, embellished by golden crowns and a crystal sea.

Now, struggling with his own conflicting emotions, a prey to the civil war which sooner or later devastates so many hearts, he attempted to see himself with proper detachment. Did he incline towards the sheep or the goats? Sheep were dull creatures; and goats smelt abominably. Small wonder that the nymphs in the classics fled from the satyrs?

He came to the conclusion that he was neither sheep nor goat, a hybrid, like the Alpaca. Was there an Alpaca in the Zoo? If so, he must have a look at it.

IV

He answered Mrs. Carmichael's letter with restraint, accepting the conditions imposed. She had not appealed in vain to his pride. Then he plunged into dogged work.

Somewhat to his dismay, not to mention the Vicar's, Tim soon discovered that he knew less—from the point of view of passing stiff examinations—than when he won his scholarship at Eton. The Vicar remarked to Sir Gilbert: "I never had a pupil who seemed to know more, and who really knew less." Nothing daunted, Tim set to work again at *principia,* which he mastered with gratifying ease and diligence.

Sir Gilbert was very kind to him, mounting him occasionally for a day with the Little Pennington hounds, and giving him many a day's shooting in outlying coverts and hedgerows: sport which whetted an appetite instead of satisfying it. Tim could not help envying the sons of mag-

nates to whom hunting and shooting were the serious business of life. About this time, his acquaintance with the son of a neighbouring parson ripened into friendship. Not far from Little Pennington was a hamlet which took its tone from the happy village. The parson happened to be a friend of Tertius White, and like him a poor man. His son, also, had won scholarships, but, unlike Tim, this scholar had a love of scholarship for its own sake. He was destined from early youth to become either pedagogue or parson, probably the latter, for much zeal informed him. He, too, owned a bicycle, and the young men spent many hours together scouring the hills and dales of Hampshire. Eustace Pomfret took himself seriously, a source of much amusement to Tim, and was almost a genius in devising schemes of self-culture upon a monumental scale. His life —so Tim reckoned—was cut-and-dried from the font; and he endeavoured not unsuccessfully to impress upon Tim the necessity of ordering even the most humdrum existence so as to exclude the interference of the Devil. That his influence over Tim was entirely for good may be questioned. Counsels of perfection wearied our hero. Nevertheless he liked Eustace, and envied him his powers of concentration, calling him "The Plodder" to his face, and behind his back "The Sap that never Rises." The Plodder was very bashful in the presence of the fair, and seemingly quite proof against their allurements. His weakness—he admitted this to Tim—was Gothic architecture. When he pursued his hobby too untiringly into dusty transepts, Tim would say derisively:

"I'd sooner look at a pretty girl."

"You will repeat that till you believe it."

"Because I'm normal. You're sexless."

"I'm not. I suppose, when I can afford it, I shall marry, as my father did. Till that time comes, the less one thinks about pretty girls the better."

"Girls could teach you a lot."

"What have they taught you, Tim?"
Then Tim would laugh scornfully, and refuse to reply.

V

Ash Wednesday ushered in Lent and the godly discipline of the Commination Service, attended by all the gentlefolk and many humbler parishioners. Tim was greatly impressed by the unction with which mild-mannered spinsters answered "Amen" to the judgments of Omnipotence against sinners. One ancient virgin positively barked her response with an inflection of impatient finality which tickled the boy's humour. He was reminded of a billiard marker in one of the Winchester taverns, who, calling the score at Pool, would yap out: "Yellow—*dead!*" in a manner that made the hope of starring quite forlorn. Tim wondered whether these worthy women really gloated over this wholesale cursing, as they appeared to do. Miss Janetta Vanburgh, the spinster aforesaid, conveyed to Tim the conviction that she had become so intolerant of sinners that she wished them cursed and, so to speak, cast as rubbish to the void without any more ado. Her shrill, staccato "Amen," invariably an instant ahead of the congregation, weighed heavily upon Tim's nerves. Under his breath he cursed her, realising with some contrition that he had thereby lowered himself to her level.

Music, more than anything else, nourished Tim's emotional sense of religion. His old Dominie, who played the organ beautifully, had trained the choir to sing simple hymns with feeling and distinction. At Evensong, especially, when Tim sat in his pew in the dimly lighted church, gazing at the altar which alone was brilliantly illuminated, seeing the Vicar's fine head, with its placid and yet austere expression, glancing too at the many faces familiar from childhood, there would sweep into his mind a passionate desire to

achieve saintliness. At such moments John Newman's hymn would move him profoundly—

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on.

He would say to himself that this church was home to many of the worshippers therein. They had found the Light. His eyes would rest with envy and affection upon the sweet face of the schoolmistress, Mary Nightingale, who never complained that the church was ill-lighted, because she knew all the psalms by heart. The girls of the village owed a deep debt to Mary Nightingale. What a beacon she had been! Some of the Penningtonians had gained the farther shore, after wading through torrents. There was old Whetren, the sexton. The Vicar wrestled long for Whetren's soul, and had prevailed. Benner, with his apostolic beard, had known a stormy youth. Tim went to Benner and asked him if he understood all that the Vicar said. Benner shook his head.

"It's like this, Master Tim, I find his voice upliftin', yes, I do, even when I misses the words and meanin'. And then I takes a mort o' comfort lookin' at they beautiful glass winders."

The stained glass in Little Pennington Church was an atrocious sample of mid-Victorian taste. Tim chuckled:

"Well, Benner, I have always wondered why that glass was put in. Now I know."

During Lent there were many services. In his robuster moments, after the Sunday luncheon—when everybody in Little Pennington feasted heavily—Tim would be tempted to indict this wholesale fasting as an orgy of righteousness. The women seemed to wallow in self-denial. Really, it afforded them pleasure, not pain, to mortify the flesh. Why not stick to butter and cream, and give up gossip?

The Vicar, remarking Tim's too pale face, prescribed a change of air and scene after Easter.

"You have worked finely, Tim. I insist upon a holiday. Go abroad for a full month and brush up your French."

Eustace Pomfret accompanied him. This oddly assorted pair crossed the channel to Havre, and thence cycled up the Seine, and down the Loire, visiting Rouen, Dreux, Evreux, Chartres, and the Touraine châteaux. Tim was in the highest health and spirits, ready to ride eighty miles a day. Eustace preferred to linger in the cathedrals. Ultimately they reached Concarneau, famous for its sardine fisheries and a small colony of artists. They spent a week there; and Tim was once more bitten with the desire to become a painter. At Concarneau, he met Cabral, the sculptor, and Briand, the painter of grey skies and seas. He could hardly tear himself from their exciting company. Eustace was not favourably impressed by these Bohemians, and affected to disdain their conversation, quoting Mathew Arnold—"Conduct is three-fourths of life."

In those simple times no railroad brought tourists to Concarneau. The artists fared sumptuously, wine and cider included, for four francs per diem or one hundred francs per mensem. Cabral said:

"On méne la vie heureuse, mon garçon."

"Wee, wee," replied Tim, who chattered French fluently, but with an atrocious accent.

"Tu reviendras—hein?"

"Wee."

On departure, Tim was embraced on both cheeks by the patronne of the Hotel des Voyageurs. The bonnes, in the coif and collar of the commune, were smilingly ready to salute him in the same early Christian fashion, but Eustace stood scowlingly by—Saint Anthony in knickerbockers. Cheers sped the travellers on their way.

"Heavenly place," said Tim.

"Smelly," riposted Saint Anthony.

"Dear, delightful people," sighed Tim.

"Brazen hussies," murmured the Saint.

Tim laughed.

"They didn't offer to embrace you, Old Plodder."

Eustace remarked solemnly:

"I thank God that I am not too good-looking."

"I can thank God that I am not too good."

Whereupon the Plodder preached a short homily, while Tim thought hungrily of the smiling faces which he was leaving behind him.

They took the packet from Saint Malo. Eustace had nicely calculated his expenses, arriving at Southampton with just enough in his purse—he carried a purse—to pay for breakfast. Tim went aboard penniless, and was obliged to offer his bicycle to the purser as security against his fare. The purser, however, cheerily consented to trust him, when Tim stated that he was the son of the Vicar of Little Pennington. Eustace asked drily:

"Why have you not sufficient money?"

Tim confessed.

"I nipped into the casino at Dinard, and dropped thirty bob at petits chevaux."

"Gambling?"

"Oh, dear, no! Votive offerings to the goddess of Fortune. She will smile upon me next time."

"I hope there will be no next time."

"Rot! Everybody gambles in some form or another. It was jolly good fun."

"At your father's expense."

"Pish! Tut! Pooh! I shall pop the gold links Sir Gilbert gave me."

And he did so.

VI

The Vicar stared hard at Tim when he reached Little Pennington.

"The pleasant land of France has agreed with you, Tim."

"In all my life I have never been so happy."

The words slipped from his smiling mouth. Instantly he cursed himself for an ingrate; but the Vicar nodded absently. Tim, very red in the face, stammered out:

"All the same, it's jolly to be home again."

He scampered round the village, dashing in and out of the cottages with a cheery word for everybody. Journey, still smelling of leather, asked many questions.

"You be brown as a berry, Master Tim."

"Glorious sunshine, Journey. Blazing on the long white roads; blazing on the faces of the people."

"Yas; you've a warm look, Master Tim. Comes o' seein' the world. Is they French maids as gay as I've heerd on?"

"Gay of heart, Journey. I fell in love with all of 'em."

"Lard bless 'ee, Master Tim! And they fell in love with 'ee, I'll go bail."

"Luckily for me, I'd my guardian angel with me. Mr. Eustace Pomfret."

"I think nothing of he. Wonnerful greenish young gentleman, to be sure! They French maids had no truck with him, I'll wager a pot of ale on that."

Tim smote his thigh, exclaiming:

"By Jove! Why didn't I——"

"What, Master Tim?"

"Why didn't I egg one of the little dears on to make eyes at him? What larks it would have been!"

He laughed riotously, beholding Saint Anthony resisting temptation.

"Any news, Journey?"

"Never is no news here," grumbled Journey. "There be a rare pretty maid at the Vicarage, come from Lanterton, she do."

"From Lanterton?"

Lanterton enjoyed an unsavoury reputation. It was not easy for a Lanterton girl to find a respectable place.

"Yas; my granfer he say that in ancient times Little Pennington was even worse than Lanterton. Granfer do

chuckle to hisself when he talks o' they brave old days. Yas; she be a rare pretty maid, Master Tim."

Tim said gravely:

"Journey, you're an old friend, but you mustn't take liberties. It's absolutely nothing to me whether there is a pretty maid at the Vicarage or not. Do you understand?"

"No offence, Master Tim. My tongue do run away wi' my wits when I be talkin' with 'ee."

Tim laughed, and went his way whistling. Journey picked up his awl as he muttered:

"The pretty maids 'll come to his whistling. Lard A'mighty! what a fine upstandin' young feller he do be!"

Tim returned to the Vicarage in time for luncheon, and entered the house, as was his wont, by the back-door. Passing the kitchen, he heard a gay laugh, a silvery ripple of joyous sound. He hesitated, and then opened the kitchen door. Perched upon the dresser sat the maid from Lanterton. When she beheld Tim, she sprang to the floor, stood upright for an instant, and then bobbed down in a demure curtsey, but her eyes twinkled roguishly. Tim greeted the cook, an old friend. Then he turned to the new maid.

"And who is this?" he asked.

"Ivy Jellicoe," replied the cook.

The name Jellicoe struck Tim as familiar. Then he remembered that there was a bold poacher called Jack Jellicoe who had been caught red-handed after a desperate encounter with a keeper. Jellicoe had been sent to Winchester gaol. The cook, reading his thoughts, and quite regardless of the newcomer's feelings, said with unction:

"She be Jack Jellicoe's daughter, Master Tim."

"Oh!" said Tim.

Ivy smiled deprecatingly, displaying an even row of very white small teeth. Her eyelids fell. Tim could not fail to remark how long and dark lay the lashes upon her delicate cheeks, and he perceived also, with an artist's eye, that her features were finely modelled. Truly, a rare pretty

maid, as Journey had said. Instinctively, he held out his hand.

"How do you do, Ivy? I hope you will be happy here."

She raised her eyelids, flashing at him a glance compounded of gratitude and admiration. Then she slipped her hand into his, murmuring bashfully:

"Thank you, sir. I do hope so, sir."

CHAPTER IV

IVY JELLICOE

I

THE Vicar was agreeably surprised by the ardour with which Tim pursued his studies after the holiday in France. He had never questioned the boy's brains, doubting only sustained powers of application. And now he was able to assure Sir Gilbert—who, indeed, needed no such assurance—that the coveted prize was well within their pupil's grasp. One lovely morning, in late May, when the lime trees in the churchyard were bursting into flower, the Vicar took Tim's hand in his and congratulated him with a warmth of feeling which made Tim gasp. A note of personal triumph informed the Vicar's quiet tones:

"We are in the sunshine again."

A rare smile flickered about his austere lips. Perhaps at that moment Tim apprehended something heretofore ignored, sounding the depths of another's hopes and ambitions. He had supposed that the Vicar's work engrossed and satisfied him. Now, he had an illuminating glimpse of ambitions focussed upon himself. His success lay in the womb of another's soul. Travail had brought it forth.

"Do you care so much?" he asked wonderingly.

The Vicar drew a deep breath; and, as he answered, he seemed to be gazing through the clay at Tim's spirit. Soul met soul upon the heights, above baffling mists and dark clouds.

"I care, I have always cared tremendously."

For a moment there was silence. The feeling in the Vicar's voice made Tim tremble. It happened to be a re-

markable voice, whose beauty imposed itself subtly in spite of, perhaps because of, certain disabilities. Not a magnificent organ such as is possessed by some popular preachers; hardly musical in the accepted sense; certainly lacking in power and volume, lacking, too, in varied inflection, not a voice wherewith to inebriate the multitude, rather the still small voice of a pure conscience seeking patiently to make itself heard by reason of its quality, invariably low and sweet and penetrating. In the pulpit and at the lectern, the Vicar stood before his congregation an arresting figure, because it seemed to be his deliberate aim to suppress himself. He scrupulously avoided the adventitious tricks of gesture and speech so common to many preachers. He never presented *his* thoughts to *his* dear friends; he was never colloquial or familiar in the House of God, except, possibly, when he was catechising the children in the nave. But his greatest attribute as an expounder of dogma or doctrine, the attribute which might have secured for him high preferment, was the measured conviction with which he spoke from the chancel, the burning faith in God's message, the absence of doubt in that message. His curate afforded a humorous contrast. That worthy and zealous young man never missed a suitable opportunity of presenting his doubts to the villagers and endeavouring to rout them, often with humiliating ill-success. He dug deep pits into which he floundered, emerging hot and breathless, with, perhaps, the disarming question upon his lips: "Have I made my meaning clear to you, my dear brethren?" Tim, then, was hardly able to restrain the impulse to leap to his feet, and shout out: "No, sir, you have not."

The Vicar continued:

"There are reasons into which I cannot go now, which explain why I have cared so much, why, in a sense that you are not yet old enough to understand, I have made your training a matter of supreme importance to myself, a matter almost of faith in what I hold to be true and everlasting."

His voice died away. Tim knew that he would say no more, that any questions would be kindly but inexorably vetoed. Curiosity consumed him. He divined vaguely that a mystery lay between himself and the Vicar, a mystery which included his mother. Of that mother and her family he knew just enough to be inordinately greedy for more. His maternal grandfather was dead; the title and what was left of a crippled estate had passed to a distant kinsman. The Vicar, reading the boy's thoughts, added a few words:

"Some day, Tim, there may be full confidence between us. I pray that such a day may come, or rather that you may advance to it, because such confidence on my part must be earned by you. When that day does dawn you will understand me—and yourself."

II

Meanwhile, Ivy Jellicoe smiled whenever she met Tim. Her voice was soft and beguiling when speaking to superiors; in the kitchen and pantry it shrilled, and the Hampshire accent became noticeable.

Tim talked to her as he talked to everybody. And Ivy prattled back to him. Her father was still in gaol; otherwise his daughter would have remained at home. She spoke of the difficulty of finding a respectable place, and of the kindness of the Vicar when this fact came to his notice. Tim took her measure with all the cocksureness of eighteen. She was a dear little thing, hardly treated because her sire was a poacher. She continued to smile at Tim.

Let us say frankly, and have done with it, that Ivy was a healthy, handsome little animal, with inherited animal propensities, and much less intelligent than she appeared. Had the Vicar been quite other than what he was he would never have taken the baggage into his house. The wife of the rector of Lanterton sniffed when she learned that

he had done so. It is certain, also, that Tim was incapable of beginning an intrigue with a maid in his father's service. He was working hard, and overworking, which may account partly for what followed. If love be a disease, then its more potent ravages are likely to affect disastrously those who have strayed from the normal.

It was unfortunate, also, that during this hot summer Tim was cut off from cricket or any other form of healthy exercise. Riding his bicycle along dusty roads was not sufficiently alluring, and playing tennis with young ladies was almost as boring. Golf—had it been possible in those days—would have adjusted the boy's equilibrium.

One morning Tim touched Ivy's soft cheek. He did not plan this move. A tear upon the damask challenged sympathy and pity.

"Anything wrong?"

"They do throw it up to me that father's in gaol."

"What a beastly shame! Never mind, Ivy! Cheer up! You're a dear little thing."

And then he had touched her cheek with the tips of his fingers, smiling pleasantly. Ivy expressed no surprise and no bashfulness. But her uplifted eyes held a note of interrogation. She said demurely:

"Oh, thank you, sir."

She waited an instant; and then flitted away, looking back smiling.

This naïve smile began to interfere with Tim's work. Why did this simple, artless creature smile upon him so persistently? Why did her eyes follow him?

About a week later, he was alone in the dining-room, late at night, trying to focus a jaded brain upon the helicoidal parabola, when Ivy tapped at the door and came in.

"Shall I put out the lights, sir? The Vicar has gone to bed."

Tim looked up from his confused figures and diagrams to behold a face not very unlike the Nina of Greuze. For a moment he stared at her, hearing her question and hav-

ing a curt "Yes" upon his lips, but saying nothing, because her expression, half beguiling, half derisive, confounded him.

"Come here!"

She drifted towards him, holding herself very upright, smilingly self-possessed.

"Why do you always smile at me?"

She answered calmly:

"I suppose, sir, it's because I like you."

"Why?"

She blushed as he put the question.

"You are such a dear, and so handsome."

Tim got up. Ivy looked grave, and oddly impassive. Tim discovered that he was trembling, with a choking sensation in his throat.

"Good-night," he said hoarsely. "Put out the lights."

"Yes, sir."

She walked slowly to the door, turning on the threshold. Her face had become piteous.

"Are you angry, sir?"

"Good Lord, no! There! Hook it!"

Ivy vanished. Tim turned to his diagrams which spun round before his eyes. *Query.* How do you compare arcs of the same curve which cannot be superposed? *Query.* Did Ivy think him a fool?

He tackled the second query first. Yes; in these affairs the male is placed in an abominably false position, although the shrieking sisterhood deny it. The maid who resists importunity is exalted, even by the man whom she virtuously repulses. But the youth who turns from ripe lips is not exalted. Joseph flying from temptation excites ridicule. Undoubtedly, Ivy thought him a fool.

He tried to analyse his emotions. He wanted to kiss Ivy. With the greatest effort he had refrained. Well, ought he not to feel uplifted? But he didn't. He felt a fool. He shut up his books and went to bed thoroughly

disgusted with himself. In the morning, however, he was bursting with excellent resolutions.

"I'll take jolly good care there's no more of that."

III

About a week later he dined at Pennington House. Sir Gilbert was entertaining a distinguished visitor, an ex-Viceroy of India. Tim felt immensely honoured at being invited to meet the great man. County magnates were present, and their wives. Tim, as the least important male, found himself between Lady Pennington and a sharp-nosed spinster who wrote novels. Lady Pennington was listening attentively to the ex-viceroy; and the lady novelist gave undivided attention to her dinner. He stared affectionately at the family portraits. There was one of Sir Gilbert painted as a young man. But Tim could never behold the Squire as other than what he was, a still vigorous octogenarian, blending consummately the most dignified self-respect with unfailing courtesy and suavity. As a young man he had been painted in the high stiff black satin stock of the period. His coat seemed to be cruelly tight about the waist. "He never got away from that stock," thought Tim. He glanced at other members of the Pennington family. Two sons and two daughters were present. They, also, exhibited the Pennington traits and distinctions, an easy air of good-breeding, a placid confidence in themselves, their position, and family. They had nothing in common with what is known to-day as smart society. Fashion was too ephemeral for a family so long rooted in the soil. The ladies wore simple gowns and little jewellery. Their voices were clear but low.

Tim sipped his champagne and enjoyed it. His sharp young ears caught every word that dropped from viceregal lips. And then, suddenly, he was included in that august conversation. Lady Pennington said in her incisive way:

"This is Tim White, our Vicar's son. India is marking him for her own."

"We must have a word or two together later," said the great man, leaning forward, and looking hard at Tim.

"Tim can tell you what fritillaries are found in our woods."

Tim could and did. It appeared that the great man was an entomologist, but he had never captured a Purple Emperor. Tim could boast a happier fortune. His eyes sparkled as he described the luring of the monarch from the oak-tops, the imperial weakness for raw steak, and the final swoop of the net. The lady-novelist eyed him with kindlier interest, and asked him if he had read her latest novel. Tim, replying in the negative, added hastily:

"I suppose I'm the only person in this room who hasn't."

Then he heard the great man's too loud whisper to his hostess:

"What a handsome boy! Mercury poised for his first flight!"

Tim blushed with pleasure.

After dinner, he remained of course with the men, and was made to feel by his kind host that he was at last one of them. When the decanters were circling, Sir Gilbert said genially:

"Tim, my boy, take a glass of '47 Port. There's not too much of it left."

Tim obeyed, and was further enjoined to sip the noble wine—which he did.

Dinner parties began and ended much earlier in those days, and the Vicar told Tim to slip back to the Vicarage and go to bed. Possibly, he may have remarked the sparkling eyes and too flushed cheeks. Tim was not accustomed to mix champagne and port.

Alone in the fresh night air, walking back to the Vicarage, he felt delightfully exhilarated, tempted to burst into song, pæans of thanksgiving, because everybody had behaved so

decently. His offence had been shelved if not forgotten—pushed out of sight and smell. Yes—he was reinstated.

In this buoyant mood, he returned home to find Ivy sitting up to open the front door, for the Vicar carried the only latch-key. Tim said boisterously:

"Oh, Ivy, I've had such a splendiferous time."

"You look like it, sir."

"And I feel—I feel——" He burst out laughing.

Ivy joined in that infectious laugh.

"How do you feel, Mr. Tim?"

She pronounced his name softly, but he was too excited to notice that.

"I'll tell you. I'll confide in you. I feel rather as I did the night I was caught out of College. I feel that I hate to go to bed. I'd like to gallop over the downs to Winchester, or swim far out to sea. I shouldn't mind a good fight with the gloves, or without 'em, by Jove!"

"You are—excited, sir."

"Yes; I am."

She smiled at him, letting her lashes fall, a trick often practised before the glass. Then she said softly:

"Shut your eyes, Mr. Tim."

"Why?"

"Shut them, and see."

He shut both eyes. Instantly he felt her soft mouth barely brushing his and then a low ripple of laughter. He seized her and kissed her lips, feeling them quiver beneath his own. He heard her murmur:

"Oh, I do like you, Mr. Tim."

He said hastily:

"I say, where's cook?"

"Fast asleep and snoring."

"I wanted excitement, and now I've got it."

"So have I. It's just too heavenly."

He went quietly into the dining-room. Ivy followed on tip-toe. The curtains were drawn and a lamp was burning. Tim sat down; Ivy slipped on to his knees, encircled his

neck with her arms, and laid her cheek against his. He pressed her to him, as she whispered:

"There's no harm in a little kissing, is there?"

Considering the state of his feelings at that moment, it is to his credit that he replied:

"I am not so sure of that."

"Haven't you ever kissed a girl before?"

"Ye-es."

"Then why shouldn't you kiss me?"

"Ivy, have you kissed other men?"

"One or two," she answered carelessly. "They expect it, the gert sillies, when you walks out with 'em. I never kissed a man unless he asked me."

"You wanted me to kiss you the other night, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did. I never liked any boy as I like you. You're handsomer and nicer than anybody else. And I haven't walked out with a young man since I came here."

From her tone Tim guessed that he was the cause of this remarkable abstention. He said shyly:

"Why not, dear?"

"Because I liked you. There! What's the use of pretending? I liked you from the first. When you took my hand in the kitchen, I could have kissed you there and then. Don't you want to go on kissing me?"

Tim hesitated and plunged.

"Yes, I do."

IV

The affair might have gone no further, had it rested with Tim. Not long ago, at a notable Church Congress, a lady declared with apparent conviction that poor girls were at the mercy of any man. It is an amazing fact that nobody present protested against this wholesale indictment of impecunious virtue; and no mother or father made mention of the innumerable boys at the mercy of women who deliberately ruin them body and soul. Those who have this mat-

ter most keenly at heart will advance their own cause very measurably when they face both sides of the Social Evil.

Tim felt uncommonly cheap the next morning, and he seized an early opportunity of coming to what he deemed to be a right understanding with Ivy Jellicoe.

"We let ourselves go a bit last night, Ivy."

"It was rare fun, Mr. Tim."

Tim, crimson with nervousness, went on hurriedly:

"You know, dear, I couldn't marry you."

"Why, Mr. Tim, I know that. Whatever put such an idea into your head. Marry the likes of me? Well, I declare!"

She laughed artlessly, with an air of such innocence that a wiser than Tim might have been pardoned for believing her to be guileless. He experienced a lively relief, as he went on, not so nervously:

"It's all right, if we both agree that it is just fun, and nothing more. Your kisses are sweet, Ivy, but——"

"What?"

"There mustn't be too many of them."

She glanced at him roguishly, displaying a brace of dimples.

"You can help yourself, Mr. Tim, when you feel like it."

"I am afraid of getting too fond of you, dear."

She laughed.

"I'll risk that. Any girl would."

Tim went back to his Sanskrit and Calculus feeling chastened and at the same time triumphant. At all costs to his emotions he must protect this pretty, naïve creature against herself. She thought nothing of kissing! Why should he? Girls in her class were accustomed to it. And she had kept her lips for him. That thrilled.

In a sense, too, he realised that he could now attack his work with renewed absorption. Kissing Ivy had cleared his brain of certain clogging and insistent fancies winged and barbed by Eros.

But he had no doubt as to what the Vicar would say about it, if he knew.

The dear saint must never know.

V

One shrinks from setting down what followed, but the facts must be told in justice to Tim. He succumbed, like many a gallant youth, to overwhelming temptation. Occasionally, the Vicar passed a night or two away from home, attending some Diocesan Conference, or preaching to neighbouring congregations. No man was more ready to relieve a fellow-priest in distress.

He was away from home, when Tim, long after midnight, heard a soft tap at his bedroom door. He opened it to find Ivy, shaking with fear. Whether or not that fear was assumed may be left to those with a full understanding of the female heart. Let us charitably assume that it was genuine.

"What's up?" asked Tim.

"There's a burglar getting into the house."

"What rot! We've nothing to burgle."

"I heard him, Mr. Tim. I didn't wake Cook because she'd scream the roof in, but I had to come to you."

"Right," said Tim. "By Jove, I rather hope the beggar is there. What a lark it would be to nail him!"

"You won't run no risks?"

"I'll stalk him. Go back to your room."

"Oh! I couldn't. I'll wait and see what happens."

Tim grasped the poker, and crept along the passage, and downstairs, excitement gripping at his vitals. After an exhaustive examination of the premises he came back to find Ivy sitting upon his bed, dangling a pair of bare feet. A dark coat covered her nightgown.

"Nothing doing," growled Tim. "You pop back into bed!"

"Mayn't I stay one minute? I'm ever so frightened."

Tim saw that she was trembling, and put his arms round her to kiss away her fears. She clung to him with an abandon which swept him off his feet, caressing his hair with her right hand, murmuring again and again her favourite sentence:

"Oh, I do like you. It is heavenly to be with you."

Tim's virtue oozed from every pore in his skin. He swore beneath his breath; he tried to push her from him, but she clung to him desperately.

"Let me go," he said fiercely.

"Why should I? You love me, and I love you."

"Let me go, I say. I want to lock the door."

She let him go, laughing softly.

Next morning he was the unhappiest youth in Hampshire. Some six months before he had witnessed a performance of *Faust* in the company of a retired colonel, who had taken one of Sir Gilbert's houses. The house stood upon a hill; and Tim often thought that although of the village it was in a sense out of it, being less permeated with Pennington traditions. The Colonel gave Tim some rough shooting; and the Colonel's wife, who belonged to a Sketching Club, taught him to draw in water-colour and to play chess. Tim loved them both because they were so kind to him, and because he could chatter more freely to them than to other Olympians. He regarded the Colonel as a man of the world, and not without reason.

After the play, sitting at supper with his host, Tim criticised drastically the protagonists because there had been no struggle. He demanded evidence of a dramatic fight between good and evil. Marguerite, he contended, had yielded too easily. Whereupon the Colonel said tentatively:

"Well, Tim, I am not so sure of that. There is a deal of cant, my boy, about what is called seduction. I feel sure that the Vicar has never discussed such a subject with you."

"Never!" said Tim.

"But you are old enough not to misunderstand what I'm about to say." He paused, glancing at Tim's handsome

face; then he continued slowly: "I do not believe that virtue is easily seduced. I do not believe that there are many men going about deliberately trying to ruin girls."

"I hope not," said Tim.

"It is my experience that these unhappy affairs come about without design, and, as a rule, swiftly and unexpectedly. Nine times out of ten the maid meets the man half way. Each is carried away by irresistible emotion. Marguerite, in my opinion, fell a victim to herself. Had she been really virtuous, had she been capable of a tremendous struggle, she would have resisted Faust. The cynical smile with which Mephistopheles looks on indicates that. The poor girl was ripe for the plucking. Virtuous maids, Tim, have not much difficulty in resisting men, and men, with rare exceptions, respect their virtue. Remember this, my boy, if the time should ever come when fierce temptation attacks you. It is almost certain that the temptation will be nearly as overmastering to the woman, and then you must be doubly strong for her and yourself."

"Thanks," said Tim soberly, much impressed by the Colonel's manner.

"You have a lot to learn about women, Tim, and from women."

Now, Tim asked himself miserably whether his education was beginning or ending. Ivy's attitude, when he first met her alone, astounded and confounded him. He expected tears and reproaches. He found smiles. He gasped out:

"Aren't you furious with me?"

"Mercy! Why should I be?"

"Heavens! I feel an unutterable beast!"

"Do you think me a bad girl?"

"No, no. We have been whirled into this, dear. I ought to have mastered myself. I ought to have thought of a thousand things."

"What things?"

He stared at her blankly. Had she not considered consequences? Was she incredibly innocent, or immeasurably

stupid? He told himself that she was neither one nor the other. Yet he must make her see what he saw.

"Ivy, my poor little girl, don't you know that we are standing upon the edge of a volcano? Aren't you frightened?"

She laughed, not brazenly, but with genuine mirth. He repeated his question. She answered it simply:

"I was never so happy in my life."

"And I was never so miserable."

Between them yawned the ocean of differences which separated Little Pennington from Lanterton, or, let us say, the Vicar from Jack Jellicoe.

"Kiss me, and don't look cross," said Ivy.

During unhappy days that followed, Tim tried again and again to peer into the girl's mind. She had given herself so gladly, so joyously, that he realised with poignant remorse how wholly she was his; and yet her mind remained a blank. To some questions she presented an impenetrable mask of silence. He decided that she must lack imagination, and was constrained to enjoy the present, being unable to visualise the future.

"If there should be trouble, I could never forgive myself."

She replied confidently:

"Of course I know that I'm safe with you, because you're a gentleman."

He answered grimly:

"I don't feel like one."

This ingenuous confidence appealed tremendously. Tim began to plan for her happiness. He bought her a trinket or two which she accepted with childlike delight. Again and again she whispered to him:

"This is the time of my life."

He met her on Sunday afternoons in the deep woods; he tried to correct her grammar; he controlled a too exuberant taste in hats; he wondered whether it would be possible to marry her. It happened that a notorious lawsuit, in which

a pretty actress had been awarded immense damages after a breach of promise suit, was reported in the daily papers. The defendant, a young nobleman, had refused to marry the girl because, so he affirmed, the great ladies of his family would be "nasty" to a daughter of the people. Critics had raised scornful voices, accusing the noble earl of snobbishness, and throwing mud at the great ladies. Tim discussed the affair with the Vicar. Of late their talks had become of a more intimate character. The Vicar rather invited a free discussion of themes of social interest. In his impersonal way, he presented fairly enough the viewpoint of the great ladies.

"Why," he asked, "should they be expected to welcome a girl between whom and them bristles what Stevenson calls 'the barrier of associations that cannot be imparted'? I should be nasty, I fear, to any village girl who aspired to marry you, Tim."

This was said half-jestingly; and Tim salted the statement, knowing that it was almost impossible for the Vicar to be "nasty" to any human being. Nevertheless, he knew in his heart that this quiet, refined scholar would never love or cherish Ivy Jellicoe, although he might receive her. And such a marriage meant the end of a promising career.

If the Vicar should find out——?

The thought drove sleep from his pillow. With some relief he perceived that Ivy was cautious as he in keeping discovery at bay. The intrigue made him miserable; it acted like champagne on her. She declared that she adored the romance of it, the secret meetings in the woods, the mask worn in public, the stolen kisses.

Tim began to realise that he was desperately attached to her; and he knew also—what he hid from Ivy—that his work was being undermined.

VI

He went up to London for the Eton and Harrow match. When he returned home after a three days' absence a strange maid opened the front door. Tim stammered out: "Hullo! Where's Ivy Jellicoe?"

The new maid answered primly: "Her pore mother's dyin'. They sent for Ivy yesterday."

The Vicar came out of the study, and greeted Tim affectionately. Tim controlled himself, whilst he answered the Vicar's questions. He was impatient to go to his room, for surely Ivy had left a note behind her. Presently, he searched diligently, finding nothing. He learned afterwards that Ivy had departed in hot haste.

At dinner the new maid waited indifferently. Tim said: "I hope Ivy is coming back."

"It is not very probable," replied the Vicar.

Next day, Tim wrote a letter which anybody might have read. He enclosed a stamped and addressed envelope, asking Ivy to let him hear from her by return of post, but she did not do so, which hurt and perplexed him. Was it possible that she failed to realise his cruel anxiety?

Her letter, when it did arrive three days afterwards, corroborated what the Vicar had said. Ivy was likely to remain at home indefinitely. The letter, nicely written, simply worded, but ill spelt, was full of love. At the end was an artless postscript: "I send you all myself."

By this time Tim was aware that he loved her to distraction. He hardly dared to admit another truth as naked to his perception. He was angry, because her woman's wit could devise no plan for a meeting, no hint of future correspondence.

After a sleepless night, he determined to be bold, rejoicing at the necessity for action. He cycled to Lanterton, arriving at three in the afternoon, when the children were at school. Ivy opened the cottage door, giving a gasp of distress when her brown eyes identified the visitor.

"How is your mother?" asked Tim. "May I come in for a minute?"

He spoke clearly, for a neighbour was listening.

"Mother's bad," said Ivy. "Please come in, sir."

Tim was ushered into the tiny parlour. He noticed with satisfaction that Ivy was wearing a clean print gown which suited her admirably. As soon as they were alone, she flew into his arms, exclaiming:

"You are a darling to come. I've been pining for you. I've cried myself to sleep every night."

"I've not slept at all," said Tim. "Now, Ivy, is it safe to write to you?"

Ivy nodded.

"I take the letters from the postman."

"Good! Here are some more stamped and addressed envelopes. Can you meet me?"

"I'll try."

"Good again. I have thought of a safe place, a snug little nook."

"Aren't you clever?"

"Haven't you thought of our meeting?"

"I've thought of nothing, except our parting."

He described the trysting-place, adding:

"We must talk over the future."

"Oh! I can't abear the thought of losing you."

"You are not going to lose me."

Just then the querulous voice of the mother was heard, calling for her daughter.

"Coming," cried Ivy. She clung to Tim, choking down her tears, murmuring inarticulate phrases. She concluded:

"All the happiness I've ever had I owe to you."

The mother called again, her weak voice rising in a pitiful crescendo of petulance and distress. Tim said hoarsely:

"Tell your mother that I called to enquire. Arrange a meeting as soon as possible."

"Indeed, I will," she replied.

VII

A demoralising fortnight followed. Twice, during that time, Ivy made appointments which she failed to keep. Tim waited for her in a copse near Lanterton, tormented by suspense, straining eyes and ears to catch the first glimpse of her, to hear the crackling of dry twigs beneath her feet, telling himself that true love surmounted all obstacles, knowing that he would have gone to her through fire and water. After waiting three hours he rushed back to the Vicarage in a fever of rage and unhappiness. Explanations reached him, but not—as he felt he had a right to expect—by the following post. The explanations revealed illuminatingly Ivy's lack of resource and imagination, her incapacity to deal with infinitesimal difficulties. Upon the first occasion, so she wrote, she had actually left the cottage, but was joined by a young man, who insisted upon keeping her company. She had not been equal to the task of "shaking" him, as she put it. Tim clenched his fists, thinking savagely how badly shaken the young man would have been had he had his way with him! The unexpected arrival of an aunt burked the second meeting. Ivy wrote piteously: "I told Auntie I wanted to meet somebody, but she laughed at me. What could I say?"

Tim told her, at some length, what she might have said.

Finally, at the third attempt, they met, passing a couple of hours in a sanctuary of wet bracken. It drizzled pitilessly nearly the whole time, and Ivy was more concerned, so it seemed to Tim, with her Sunday gown than with her heart's feelings. As soon as he began to talk of the future, she wriggled uneasily, assuming an expression with which he was already too familiar, the impassive mask of the peasant, which conceals successfully so much and often so little.

He asked her passionately:

"Ivy, dear, how do you feel?"

She answered literally:

"I be getting dreadful wet."

"Heavens! What does that matter?"

Fortunately, he had brought an umbrella. They sat under a thick holly with the umbrella above them. Lovemaking, under such conditions, is possible but inconvenient.

"You will come back to the Vicarage, Ivy?"

"May be."

"Why are you so cold, dear?"

She shivered slightly:

"I be cold. 'Tis the wind and the rain."

Tim waxed desperate. The thought gained strength that this might be their last meeting; for he was approaching the conviction that separation was inevitable; and it is fair to add that he considered her welfare rather than his own. Obviously she was too young and inexperienced to carry on an intrigue. Discovery would destroy her. But if this were destined to be their last tryst, let it be an imperishable memory for each. He would remain her faithful friend always. He spoke miserably of his approaching exam and India. Ivy pouted.

"It's so silly to think of what's ahead."

"But, hang it all! We must."

"Not now. Have you brought any chocolates?"

He had. She munched them with delight, displaying her dimples and smiles, captivating him afresh with her determination to enjoy the passing minute, rain or no rain. He tried to rise or sink to her simple philosophy. Presently, she said softly:

"We can't help loving each other. It's Nature."

"Ah! But we're not living under natural conditions. In the South Sea Islands this would be marriage à la mode."

"Marriage? You ain't bothering your curly head about that, surely?"

"I can't help bothering about lots of things."

"You are a funny dear! But I just love every word you

say; except when you talk of the silly old future. We may be dead and buried come Michaelmas."

Then he had a revealing glimpse of the rustic mind. This, then, was the point of view of girls in Ivy's station of life. He grasped the elemental fact that sorrow, disease and death encompass the poor from the cradle to the grave; and just because sorrow is more likely to be their portion than joy, so therefore do they acclaim joy, when it comes to them, as the greatest thing in the world. They know, alas! that sorrow will follow anyway.

Tim registered a vow that he would give an artless creature what she wanted, and she assured him that this was sufficient unto her.

Next day he received a letter which pleased him greatly. In it she further revealed herself. "I shall be miserable till we meet again."

Surely she was telling the truth. Heretofore he had questioned the quality of her love, not its quantity. In moments of depression, waiting for her in the bracken, he had told himself that Ivy had taken this love affair too lightly. He did not blame her. Perhaps she was right, poor little dear! to dance in the sunlight regardless of gathering shadows. She had known from the first that the sun would soon decline below her horizon. She had measured the distance between Lanterton and Little Pennington. And then, shutting both eyes, she had jumped.

This particular letter made a profound impression. Did he dare to marry her secretly? A vision of Daffy stood by his pillow, Daffy, the pure maiden, once the wife and sweetheart of his dreams. But he turned from her impatiently, because she had failed him in his hour of bitter need. Ivy had given everything, demanding nothing—except kisses and laughter, and chocolates! At their next meeting he decided to bare his soul, to leave the issues in her keeping. She wrote soon afterwards to name another day, but this billet ended in a minor key:

"I simply loathe to tell you," she wrote, "that I was out

last Sunday with that young chap who prevented our first meeting. He hangs about and pounces on me. I go with him because, as I told you, I can't shake him, but I keep him in proper order. I felt I had to tell you. Thank Goodness! he don't worry me on weekdays."

Tim felt horribly sick. A revulsion seized him. He wrote furiously, telling her that she must choose between this "chap" and himself. He tore up the letter when he reread it. Ivy had been honest with him. The girl must live her normal life, when apart from him, as he lived his. Had he not walked with a pretty girl upon that very Sunday, one of his own class? And she had shown herself slightly flirtatious. But he had not responded. Nor had Ivy.

The day of the appointed tryst came, a cloudless, sultry morning heralding a broiling afternoon. Unhappily, he was forced to lie to the Vicar about his plans. This made him very dejected and unable to work. He cycled to the trysting-place, and waited two hours.

Ivy did not come.

He suffered abominably, racking his brain to determine what could have prevented her. He knew the hour when she had to return home to prepare the evening meal. Upon the off chance of getting a glimpse of her, he rode into Lanterton, and smoked a pipe at a discreet distance from the Jellicoe cottage. Presently Ivy appeared, not alone.

Ernest Judd was with her. Tim remained in the shade of a tree. The pair parted at the gate of the cottage. Journey sauntered up the road, whistling. Upon his smug, pleasant face lay the expression of one well pleased with himself. Obviously, he had passed an agreeable afternoon. He did not perceive Tim.

Tim rode home as swiftly as Jehu drove his horses. He told himself that he was a jealous fool and a madman; and the mere repetition of the words seemed to make him more foolish and more mad. Thus do the fetters of the flesh eat into the soul.

During the reaction that followed, he became hopeful

again. On the morrow there would be a letter from Ivy, explaining everything. The poor child had been pestered by this fellow, and was too inexperienced to deal with him. Yes, yes; it was insensate folly for him to be jealous of Journey.

That evening the Vicar commented upon his worn appearance. Tim had to admit that he was sleeping wretchedly. The Vicar said in his kindest tones:

"Have you anything on your mind, my dear boy? If so, tell me."

"The work is going badly. If I should be spun——!"

The Vicar laughed.

"Tim, you foolish boy, I applaud your modesty, but you exercise it at the expense of your wits. Seriously, you are not only certain to pass your exam, but to pass high up in the list. Come, come, put such idle misgivings from you."

Tim nodded. Impulse urged him to confess. Never had he felt so near and dear to his father. He trembled upon the very brink of confession. But he remained silent.

Next morning there was no letter from Ivy.

By this time anger and jealousy had passed away. He wrote a tender letter, which assuredly the Vicar, saint as he was, might have read with compassion and sympathy. He beseeched Ivy to trust him, to open her mind and heart. He suspected that her courage might have failed her, that she dreaded discovery and all it included. He ended as follows: "If you are afraid, darling Ivy, and you may well be so, tell me, and I will leave you alone."

He had to wait thirty-six hours for her answer. This is what she wrote in reply:

"Dear Mr. Tim,

"I'm afraid you are right. My courage has failed me. It do worry me so. And my affections is turning to somebody else. I feel as how you will soon get sick of me. I don't blame you, dear. Our hands have met, but not our hearts.

"Your miserable little

"Ivy."

Then Tim saw red. He replied with a violence which brought relief to his lacerated tissues:

"YOU CRUEL, HEARTLESS DEVIL:

"I could almost kill you. May the day come when the real love you never felt for me, but which you may live to feel for another man, is thrown back at you. Do what you like with this letter. Shew it to Ernest Judd, nail it to the Church door, so that all the world may see you as I see you—a wanton!"

She made no reply. Tim attacked his work with feverish zeal, but an evil spirit possessed him, and he knew it. He prayed fervently that it might be cast out, that he might become clean. For a few hours he hugged to his soul the fond belief that his prayer had been answered. Then the devil within tore him afresh.

As the days passed, he regretted his too brutal outburst. He wrote once more to Ivy—

"I ask you to forgive me. I wrote to you harshly, and perhaps unjustly. I take back what I said. I am man enough to hope sincerely that the heartlessness with which you have treated me may not recoil upon you."

Ivy answered this letter.

"Of course I forgive you, dear. I could forgive you anything, but the worry is too much. I am still your own little IVY."

Tim accepted this as final. Part of the autumn he spent in Scotland, fishing and rock-climbing with Eustace Pomfret. He returned sane in mind and body, able to affirm that the unclean spirit had left him. He knew that it was well for him and for Ivy that the affair was ended. He swore that this bitter experience should colour and not discolour his future.

In this chastened mood, he attacked freshly his work.

Unhappily, as the Vicar had said, the fateful shadows which dog our actions do not vanish because we fail to see them. One afternoon Tim entered the Vicarage, to find Nemesis limping sadly towards him.

"Your father wishes to see you in the study, Mr. Tim."

"Right," said Tim.

The cook, who delivered this message, said nervously:

"I'm afraid, Mr. Tim, your pore father is ill."

"What?"

"I'm sure he looks like death."

"Heavens! He was well enough this morning. What has he been doing?"

"Nothing, as I knows on, Mr. Tim. That audacious Jack Jellicoe was with him for nearly an hour. Just out of prison, too. Seems to have upset your father terribly."

Tim became scarlet. Did this woman guess? Was she trying to warn him, to prepare him for some appalling shock? With a tremendous effort he pulled himself together.

"I will go to my father," he said.

CHAPTER V

SCOURGINGS

I

TIM found the Vicar staring at the portrait of Mrs. White. He remembered this afterwards, being too excited at the time to think of anything except impending catastrophe. It was odd, but he had never seen his father staring at that beautiful picture, by far the most lovely object in a prim, dull house.

The Vicar turned as Tim entered the room, and instantly the boy perceived the ravages of anger and the more subtile stigmata of intense pain. The Vicar's fine face was white and twisted; his blue eyes were blazing, the pupils much contracted, so that the irides seemed of a larger size and deeper in colour.

"Stand there!" The Vicar raised a minatory forefinger.

Tim obeyed.

"The father of Ivy Jellicoe has been here." The Vicar spoke in a strange voice to Tim, the voice of a furious man. He had never thought of his father as capable of ungovernable wrath. So the archangel might have appeared, the mighty Michael, as he stood at the gate of Eden, brandishing his flaming sword.

"He tells me," continued the Vicar, "that Ivy is in trouble; you know what I mean?"

"Yes."

"The girl lays her trouble at your door. Is it true? Yes —or no."

"It is true."

"My God!" exclaimed the Vicar.

Tim remained silent.

"You have defiled this house!"

Tim opened his lips and closed them. The fatuity of speech overwhelmed him. The Vicar paused for an instant.

"You seduced this child, sir?"

"No."

"What do you mean? How dare you take this line?"

"It happened," said Tim miserably, "all of a sudden. We came together as—as the birds do."

The Vicar laughed scornfully.

"Indeed? As the birds do. And you compare yourself and her, creatures made in God's image, to the birds, who, let me remind you, rank next to the reptiles in the scale of creation. *The birds!*"

He lifted his hand.

"I am tempted to strike you."

"Do it," said Tim.

The Vicar sank into a chair, covering his face with his hands. An eternity of silence followed. Finally, when the Vicar spoke, he had regained somewhat his normal composure.

"I will listen patiently to what you have to say."

Tim wondered what he could say. He stammered out:

"I am ready to marry Ivy."

The Vicar sat bolt upright.

"And do you think that marriage will make an honest woman of her, or a clean man of you?"

"I don't know," faltered Tim.

"I do know. I regard Marriage as a sacrament, the greatest, perhaps, of all sacraments so far as this world is concerned. Did you promise her marriage."

"No."

"In fine, you took what she had to give, giving nothing in return?"

"We wanted each other."

"And that, in your opinion, justifies what has taken place?"

"I don't say so."

"Marriage," said the Vicar trenchantly, "will not satisfy the exigencies of this case. It could only lead to more misery and sin. My mind is clear on that. More, the unhappy girl does not demand marriage, nor does her father. He came here to-day to ask for—money, hush-money. His attitude is that of shameless indifference. I have arranged that the girl shall be sent away. I have promised to provide for her and her unborn child. But, mark me well, such a scandal as this can not be stifled. The truth will leak out. Her parents are not the only persons aware of her condition. And everybody knows that she was here, a servant in my house, under my protection, and presumably safe in my keeping."

The mournfulness of his tone touched the boy profoundly.

"Father!"

He held out his hands, trembling, in a white heat of supplication.

The Vicar stood up.

"Don't call me that!"

"I have sinned," cried Tim, "but you are my father. Nothing can alter that."

"I am not your father," said the Vicar.

Tim heard, but did not understand. There was another pause, during which Tim's boyhood fled from him. He confronted the other as a man. His voice deepened as he demanded passionately:

"What do you mean, sir?"

The Vicar answered quietly:

"I would spare you, if I dared. In your interests, not mine, the truth must be told. Sit down!"

II

Tim sat down upon a hard Windsor chair.

"I have hoped and prayed," said the Vicar, "that the day would come when I could tell you the facts of my marriage to your mother without inflicting pain upon either you or myself. Such a day would have come, if you had justified your upbringing, if you had proved yourself strong enough to learn the truth, which would have brought us nearer together in a communion not of the flesh but of the spirit. Before God, I have loved you as a son. I will add this: I have staked my happiness and peace upon you: I have said to myself that, if I failed with you, I should regard my life as a failure. And I so regard it to-day."

Tim felt himself shrivelling, scorched and consumed by the flame in the speaker's eyes.

"Look at that picture," commanded the Vicar.

Tim did so. His lovely mother seemed to smile down upon them—derisively, as if she were a mute witness of their common suffering. The Vicar continued in a low voice, articulating each phrase slowly and painfully:

"Your grandfather gave to me my first living. It was a parish in the West of Ireland, dominated by a Roman Catholic priest. My duties were light. I had abundant leisure to reflect bitterly upon my own helplessness and loneliness. I met your mother. She was a lovely, impulsive creature, intensely sympathetic, but weak in moral fibre, as you are. We became friends. I learned to love her, but I was aware from the first that she would never care for me, except as a faithful friend. And it seemed to me that this was enough. I did help her to bear an unhappy lot. Your grandfather was one of the handsomest men of his day; he was also a drunkard, a gambler, and an evil-liver. Brilliant men came to his house, because he was a wit, and entertained lavishly, far beyond his means. Amongst his guests was a famous politician, unhappily married to

an insane wife. He fell desperately in love with your mother, and she with him. I looked on, unable to interfere, knowing what was at stake—her happiness and good name. Meanwhile, her father was urging upon her a marriage of convenience, from which she revolted. And then the dreadful day came when she told me how it was with her, and entreated me to help her."

The Vicar paused. Tim said thickly:

"But the other—the politician?"

"Was dead," the Vicar replied sombrely. "His yacht went down in a gale of wind in Dublin Bay."

"And you—you married her?"

"Yes," muttered the Vicar. "I gave her the protection of my name. At first she refused to accept it, but she was weak, and I was strong. Perhaps I hoped that one day she would become mine. That day never came. I took her abroad. You were born. Three weeks later she died in my arms. Afterwards, my old friend, Sir Gilbert, offered me this living. That is all."

Tim was struck dumb. He stared at his mother's picture and then at the man in whose arms she had died; and all the time a voice, not his own, seemed to be repeating:

"He is not your father—he is not your father." And in answer to this, as if from a great distance, the Vicar's voice floated to him:

"Legally, you are my son. I accept that responsibility fully. What I have told you must remain a secret between us to the end, not for my sake, nor yours, but for hers."

Tim nodded, too dazed to speak. But gradually, like a heavy mist that lifts, his mental atmosphere cleared. The truth was terrible, confounding, but he wondered that some instinct had not prepared him for it. The Vicar sat very still, leaning his head upon his hand, gazing through the window, not at the soaring spire, but at the thick hedge which guarded so jealously the shrine of the poet and prophet.

We must think of Tim for the moment as recovering from a terrific blow. First of all he saw himself an orphan, indeed; then he perceived more clearly the Vicar, looking—even as Cook had said—sick unto death. The amazing virtue which informed his whole kindly presence seemed to have gone out of him. Tim, following his mournful glance, knew that the saint's high thoughts had descended to earth, and lay there in shattered humiliation. At this moment he was far sorrier for the Vicar than for himself—and well might he be!

Lastly, with a swallow's flight, he swooped from the happy village to Lanterton, beholding Ivy, that joyous nymph, in sore trouble. The first tears he shed were for her.

"I must go to Ivy," he faltered.

"No," said the Vicar, holding up his hand. He spoke harshly, almost threateningly. "That is part of your punishment. You have wrought mischief enough. To the best of my poor ability I have tried to make reparation. The girl leaves her home this day. I promise you that she shall be cared for. When did you see her last?"

"Two months ago. We—we agreed to part, sir."

"I gathered as much from the father. You spoke of marrying this unhappy girl, but I doubt whether she would marry you. I forbid you to see her."

A dull resentment, hounded by a realisation of his impotence, began to burn in Tim. Once more he told himself that his conduct was to be cut and dried by another, that he must conform, as before, to the dictates of authority, regardless of his own feelings and sensibilities.

"That's not fair on me."

"Possibly not. I am considering her, not you."

"Ivy must want me—she must."

"If her father is to be believed, she does not want you."

Tim groaned. Yes; he could conceive of Ivy shrinking from him, turning reproachful, despairing eyes upon him,

upbraiding him bitterly, forgetting the happiness which he had brought, thinking only of the shame.

"And now," said the Vicar wearily, "let us speak of yourself, your future. You are aware that you are not eligible as a candidate for the Indian Civil Service without a signed certificate from me testifying to your moral qualifications for a profession which exacts the highest integrity from the youngest of its servants. I can not sign that certificate."

"I suppose not," said Tim.

"The fact of your expulsion from Eton——"

"Don't rub it in!" exclaimed Tim. "I know that you can't lie about me. Do you think I would ask you to do so?"

"Then we are agreed that we must consider something other than the ordinary professions?"

"Yes."

"There remains—business. There is no other field for your talents. Meanwhile——"

He paused, sighing.

"Yes?"

"I must have time to—to readjust, to have a clearer vision of you, to——"

His voice died away. Tim said passionately:

"Of course you loathe the very sight of me!"

The Vicar blinked at him, almost feebly. His eyes seemed to have become dim and dull; the anger had quite gone out of them. He lay back in his chair with the air of an old, tired man. He shook his head.

"I do not see you yet. I must be alone. Leave me!"

Tim moved to the door. As he reached it, the Vicar said incisively:

"You are not going to her?"

"I must obey you, sir," said Tim bitterly. "It is all that you ask of me, and you have the right to ask it."

He went out into the passage, closing the door.

III

Tim walked to the coach-house, animated by the desire to mount his bicycle, and rush away from the Vicarage. Then a thought flew into his mind. He ran upstairs to his bedroom. In a corner lay the canvas satchel which he had carried through France. He crammed into it a few things, and then scribbled half a dozen lines upon a sheet of notepaper. He told the Vicar that he was going away for a couple of days, that he meant to ride off the first pangs of remorse, and spare the Vicar the sight of his face. He ended: "I swear to you that I am not going to Ivy."

He left the note upon the hall table, and mounted his bicycle, riding slowly through the village. It lay placidly basking in the amber sunshine of an autumnal afternoon. Tim passed the church and the churchyard. At the Lych-Gate stood an open fly from which tourists were descending, pilgrims to the grave of the poet. Across the road stood the forge, the post-office, and the principal tavern. East and west wandered the irregular lines of houses and cottages. Out of the girls' school children were streaming. Their laughter and chatter fell insistently upon Tim's ears. Northward was the park, with its herds of fallow deer, its splendid trees, its open wind-swept spaces sloping to the ponds at the farther end. Everywhere Tim remarked ordered simplicity and neatness, as if some beneficent providence had taken a huge pair of shears and then clipped and pruned too luxuriant growths according to immemorial pattern. At the door of a cottage was Lady Pennington's phaëton, drawn by a pair of spirited cobs. A groom stood at their heads. Tim accelerated his pace, unwilling to risk a meeting with an old, kind friend of keenest insight and unerring judgment. She would condemn him, when she knew. He would be cast out of Pennington House as unworthy of its unstained traditions.

He passed the stone wall of the Sanctuary, peering

through the white gate at the smooth gravel sweep bordered by velvety sward. He could remember swinging upon that gate with Daffy. In the Dell beyond he had kissed her. A voice called him by name. Arthur Hazel, the dominie, waved his hand.

"Whither away?" he asked.

Tim answered sharply:

"I don't know." And then he clapped on the brake, and leapt to the ground, propping the bicycle against the wall. He spoke eagerly to the dominie:

"Mr. Hazel, I gave you a lot of trouble in the old days, eh?"

"No, no. I loved teaching you."

"Did you? Well, I've never thanked you; I've never told you that you were awfully patient and good to me."

Hazel's pale face flushed with pleasure.

"That is pleasant to hear," he said quietly. "God bless you, my boy."

He held out his hand, which Tim grasped, unable to speak. He remounted his bicycle, and sped on, hearing Hazel's voice, and above it the cawing of innumerable rooks. Afterwards he could never think of the village without seeing the bent figure of the schoolmaster, and hearing the rooks.

A minute later, by an odd coincidence—or was it more than that?—he encountered Ernest Judd. He wondered whether Ernest knew. He slowed up, as Ernest approached, trying to read the expression upon a red, bovine face. Ernest had grown into a stalwart young man. Torn by curiosity, Tim jumped down, and accosted his former friend and disciple.

"Hullo, Journey!"

"Good-day, Mr. Tim."

Journey's face seemed to be strangely impassive. Tim put a question with startling abruptness:

"Have you seen Ivy Jellicoe lately?"

Journey's complexion deepened in tint, as he replied defiantly:

"Yes, I have. Why?"

"How is she?"

Their eyes met aggressively. Tim glanced up and down the road. Nobody was in sight. Journey said slowly:

"You know how she is, seemin'ly."

"How do you know?"

"Because she told me." As Tim winced, Journey added:

"Her secret is safe wi' me, Mr. Tim. God A'mighty knows that, as safe as 'tis with Him."

Tim trembled.

"I saw you with her one day."

"Did 'ee?"

"Journey, my fa—the Vicar knows."

"Ah! I reckoned that Jack Jellicoe 'd go first to t' Parson, pore dear man!"

"I'm in the most hellish trouble," said Tim. "I feel like killing myself."

"Ivy feels that way, too."

Tim recovered his self-possession.

"Journey, how do *you* feel about it?"

"'Tain't none o' my business, Mr. Tim."

"But you liked Ivy; you walked out with her. Oh, damn it! you must know a lot that I'd give the world to know. Can't you help me? Say something—say something. I'm forbidden to go near her."

"Ah! That be common sense, to be sure! She don't want 'ee to come nigh her. That's truth, Mr. Tim."

"It seems so strange, so heartless."

His white wretched face, his trembling limbs, moved the other deeply. Journey began to blubber, great sobs shaking him. Tim jumped hotfoot to the wrong conclusion:

"Oh, Journey, for God's sake, don't tell me that you cared for her!"

"I be tarr'ble sorry for ee, Mr. Tim. Yas, I be. I'd like to comfort ee, yas, I would; I be blubberin', like a fulish

maid because I be so sorry for ee. I ain't sorry for myself, and I ain't too sorry for Ivy, because she's light, Mr. Tim. I could ha' told ee that afore ever you met her. They Jellicoes is all light. 'Tis in the blood. I walked out wi' her for a lark. I wouldn't marry such as she not for fifty pound."

"Heavens! She was light with you?"

"No. That fair madded me; yas, it did. Because I knowed she was willin' enough, only afeared. I make bold to swear you was the only one, Mr. Tim. She got after ee, I'll wager my life on that. She's light, pore dear soul. It was tarr'ble bad luck your takin' up wi' she. And now she fair hates ee."

"Hates me?"

"Aye. 'Tis well you should know it. Seemin'ly, that proves her lightness to my way o' thinkin'. She never loved ee, Mr. Tim. She loved the good times you had together. And when you got nervous and miserable, why she just turned from ee, yas, she did, and laughed at ee—to me."

Tim's cup overflowed. The grim humour of the situation appalled him. He saw himself as a puppet, the plaything of Fate and a village girl. Beside him, even poor, blubbering Journey loomed colossal. The blow to his pride was so overwhelming that he was conscious of nothing except the instinct of the wounded animal to escape, to hide himself for ever and ever. He managed to disguise his feelings from Journey, grasping him fiercely by the hand, so fiercely that Journey winced with pain.

"Thank you," he said hoarsely.

"Where be goin, Mr. Tim?"

Tim answered mechanically as before:

"I don't know."

IV

Southampton was reached within an hour. As he passed through the Bargate, Tim became conscious of an extraor-

dinary thirst. His throat was parched; his tongue swollen; and an evil bitter taste filled his mouth. To quench this awful thirst was his immediate object, but he purposely avoided the well-known hotels, riding on till he came to a tavern near the docks, frequented by the better class of seamen, mates of sailing vessels, and the like, with whom Tim had often exchanged agreeable and informing talk. You may not be surprised to learn that during a brief sixty minutes Tim had tackled and resolved the pressing problem of his future. As a boy he had been enchanted with Ouida's famous "Under Two Flags." He decided, now, that he would find his way to Algiers and offer his services to the Foreign Legion; and he hoped that there would be plenty of fighting with Arab sheiks, and the welcome possibility of a glorious death. He selected this tavern partly because he was not likely to meet any acquaintance there, and partly because he wished to discover the quickest and cheapest way of reaching Algiers.

The bar was cosy, furnished with old mahogany, and embellished by cases of stuffed birds and butterflies. There were rows of cordials in square cut-glass bottles, a net full of lemons, and sundry small, highly varnished kegs, brass-bound, with shining brass taps.

The licensed victualler behind the bar, a thick-set fellow, had distinguished himself locally as a boxer. And next to the bar was a large room, hung round with portraits of Jem Mace, Tom Sayers, and other pets of the Fancy. Anybody wanting a round or two with the gloves could satisfy such a want easily and quickly.

Tim called for a pint of bitter, and partially slaked his thirst by swallowing most of it at one draught. The man behind the bar nodded to him. Tim surveyed the company.

A weather-beaten individual in a thick pilot jacket challenged attention. He seemed a cheery sort; so Tim invited him to wet his whistle, an invitation promptly accepted. After sparring for an opening, Tim asked for special in-

formation about Algiers. Much to his disappointment, the man in the pilot coat admitted his ignorance of Mediterranean ports. But he hazarded the opinion that Marseilles was the right place. Thence Algiers could be reached either by steam packet or sailing vessel. After more talk, Tim learned that his companion was first mate of a four-master sailing next day to San Francisco, a three months' voyage.

"Jolly!" said Tim.

"You wouldn't say so if you was taking in sail in a gale o' wind, my lad, off the Horn."

"Must be awfully exciting."

"It is, my lad. Ever been to sea?"

"Never!"

"I thought not. You have a drop with me before you go home to lie atween clean sheets."

Tim said scornfully:

"I want to get away from clean sheets. That's why I asked you about Algiers."

"Ho! Trouble?"

Tim nodded.

"Bit o' skirt, I dessay?"

"Quite right," said Tim.

The mate eyed him with greater interest, marking his handsome face and strong body. He sighed deeply, growling out:

"I was never much bothered with females. Always supposed I wasn't to their taste, and grateful I am to Gawd for that. Give you the chuck, maybe?"

"In a way she did," Tim admitted. He was afire to deliver himself of his burden, for he felt that this cheery fellow might be sympathetic. Just then the talk was interrupted by a stranger, a heavy-shouldered, sandy-haired young man with large dirty hands, hanging nautically at his side.

"Be you Mr. Tull?" he asked.

"That's my name right enough."

"First mate of *The Cassandra?*"

"You've hit it again? What you want?"

"To work my way to 'Frisco."

"Ho! Want to ship with me—hay?"

"Don't mind if I do."

The mate eyed him up and down, very critically, whereat the young man said shortly:

"I can fill the job."

"I dessay you can. We do happen to want one more."

Tim jumped up.

"Take me, sir."

The "sir" was a master touch; but the mate laughed genially, saying:

"You? Well, I admire your spunk, but ain't you a gentleman?"

"I'm strong and active. Does anything else matter?"

The newcomer expectorated his disgust. He stared offensively at Tim, stroking a chin upon which bristled a two days' growth of red stubble.

"Strong? You? I could lick the likes of you with one hand tied behind me back."

"I don't think so," said Tim modestly. He appealed persuasively to the mate.

"Do take me, sir."

"Shut up yer girlie face," said the other applicant. "I mean business."

"So do I."

The mate scratched his head, staring harder than ever at Tim.

"I like the cut of yer jib," he grunted, "but t'other asked first. Got yer discharges, my lad?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take me," pleaded Tim.

"You say one more word," interrupted the heavy-shouldered young man, "and I'll knock yer bloomin' 'ead off."

"You are at liberty to try," said Tim politely. The mate

roared with laughter, smiting his vast thigh with a hand not much smaller than a leg of mutton.

"Hold hard!" he shouted, for Heavy Shoulders was putting his fists up. "We'll settle this yere little difference of opinion in the next room, if you two kids is agreeable." He turned to Tim, broadly grinning: "I'll take the winner to San Francisco."

"I'm much obliged to you, sir," said Tim.

V

The preliminaries of this sparring match were soon arranged, the Licensed Victualler gladly taking upon himself the duties of timekeeper and referee. Tim stripped to his jersey, and so did Heavy Shoulders, whose massive arms, bull neck and immense hard hands found favour with the onlookers. Nobody was willing to back Tim, except the mate, who took six to one in half crowns. A dirty pair of gloves were pulled out of a cupboard, somewhat to Heavy Shoulders' disgust, for he expressed a preference for bare knuckles.

"No fightin' here," said the Licensed Victualler. "Just a leetle friendly set-to. Shake 'ands, both of yer."

The young men did so. Heavy Shoulders scowled viciously. Tim smiled. He was no tyro at the game, and eyed with pleasure the somewhat weak underpinning of his antagonist.

" 'Ware clinchin'," said the Timekeeper.

Heavy Shoulders rushed in, determined to end the fight with one blow. Tim side-stepped neatly, so neatly that Heavy Shoulders staggered and almost fell. A professional fighter would have taken swift advantage of the stumble, but Tim waited, still smiling. Heavy Shoulders, cursing freely, advanced more cautiously. Tim countered a straight left, landing on the jaw lightly.

"I'll take five to one," said the Mate.

At the end of the first round, Heavy Shoulders was panting. Tim was fresh as paint. The Mate said to him earnestly:

"Keep away from him. Don't mix things up! See?"

"Right," said Tim.

In the middle of a more lively second round Tim was knocked off his legs, but sprang up quickly with a bleeding mouth. His pleasant smile vanished as Heavy Shoulders bored in, swinging both hands. Tim ducked and escaped.

"Good foot-work," said the Mate approvingly.

Sticking tight to his man, Heavy Shoulders landed another blow. Tim was hitting twice to the other's once, but his blows appeared to lack force. By the end of the round Tim showed slight signs of distress.

"Stick to his ribs," counselled the mate.

Tim profited by this excellent advice during the third round, ducking and side-stepping till Heavy Shoulders swore that he was funking. Three times Tim's left struck hard and true just above the belt, but he was slow to follow up such attacks.

"I'll take four to one," remarked the Mate.

Heavy Shoulders was perspiring profusely. Looking at his set face and protruding chin, it might be inferred that he intended to finish his man—if he could.

"You watch out this time," counselled the mate, "and, look ye here, when you hit him in the ribs with yer left, follow it up quick with yer right, on 'is 'ead!"

"Ra—ther," said Tim, wiping his mouth.

The fourth and last round began. Possibly Tim was sensitive to outside criticism; possibly, too, he had gained confidence. When Heavy Shoulders rushed in, he stood still, and let his antagonist close. In defiance of timekeeper and referee, Heavy Shoulders clinched, but as he did so Tim found once more the spot just above the belt, and his body was behind the blow. Heavy Shoulders hung weakly

for an instant. Tim let go his right, crashing full upon the point of the jaw.

Heavy Shoulders was down—and out.

It may be said of the defeated youth that he took his licking with surprising grace, and with it half a sovereign, with which Tim could ill afford to part. The mate clapped Tim upon the back, and swore that he had the makings of an able-bodied seaman. True to his promise, he engaged Tim there and then. It was settled between them that Tim should sell his bicycle, and buy what kit was necessary, the mate undertaking to help him. Finally he said heartily:

"And now, my lad, what's yer name?"

Tim hesitated. What was his name? He replied slowly:

"Timothy—Green."

"Ho! Green, is it? Well, my lad, salt water will wash the green out of you before we cross the Line. Green—hay?"

"Why not, sir?" asked Tim.

BOOK TWO: GREEN

BOOK TWO: GREEN

CHAPTER I

BUFFETINGS

I

TIM fell in love with the sea, being obstreperously healthy, but it was not love at first sight. For a time he suffered abominably torments of mind and body. During twenty-four hours he was very sea-sick. The smell of the foc'sle made him heave before the ship did. Homesickness assailed him, with even sharper pangs, as he stood upon the main deck of *The Cassandra,* amid a litter of hen-coops, spare gear, and 'longshore truck, and saw the woods of Cadland fading out abeam. The great ship followed her tug into swashing seas. It was blowing half a gale. *The Cassandra* jerked and jibbed at her hawser, as if she was loath to leave smooth water. The black smoke from the tug's funnels blew into Tim's eyes, and made them water. Was it that, or something else? Sorely was he tempted to jump overboard into the yeasty wake and end all miseries and perplexities.

Then he heard the voice of Tull, the first mate, heartening him up at the moment when he was wondering dismally how long it took to drown. Tull clapped the boy on the back, bawling out:

"How goes it, my cock o' wax?"

What a nerve-shattering voice! Tim scraped up a feeble smile. The mate grasped his arm, and went on bawling:

"Get some salt pork into you, my lad. Nothing like that to stick to the ribs. The bo'sun has my orders to go easy with you for a spell, but ain't this grand—hay?"

Tim responded feebly. The vitality of the mate was irresistible.

"Dips her nose into it, the pretty glutton!"

Tim's eyes gazed ahead instead of abeam. Pale amber shafts of wintry sunlight pierced the flying wracks of cloud; they whitened the foam on the crest of the waves and deepened the brilliant emerald of their hollows. As the ship bent before the blast, the water boiled and bubbled through the scuppers.

"Ain't it good to be alive?" asked the mate.

Something in Tim made him answer "Yes."

"Go below! These slippery decks ain't safe for a greenhorn. Lie snug! You'll be right as a trivet before we're out of the Channel."

Tim went below, where one of the crew for'ard gave him a tin full of boiling coffee and a biscuit. Tim had shipped as a foremast hand (whatever that might mean; he didn't know or care at the time), and, although *The Cassandra* was pitching and yawing, he was not yet so sea-sick as to be quite incapable of taking a squint at his shipmates. They were, indeed, a fairly good lot, for *The Casandra* had an honest character; and her skipper was neither bully nor beast; but what a ruffianly crew they appeared to the Etonian! What Gadarene swine! Bearded, salted veterans, pallid, greasy foreigners—Turks, heretics, infidels, Jumpers and Jews. That line out of the dear old "Ingoldsby Legends" came into his mind as he stared, hollow-eyed, at the companions with whom he would have to talk and eat and sleep and work during three long months! Most of them were half drunk, smelling evilly of beer and bad spirits, cursing sadly because work had yet to purge them of 'longshore appetites and lusts. Heavens! what a rabble, surely the scum of the earth and the high seas!

The Cassandra began to pitch more heavily.

Tim crawled into his bunk and wished that he was dead.

II

The sickness and homesickness passed. And with it much of his remorse. A boy of nineteen can easily forgive his enemy, if that enemy happens to be himself. The sorrow and disappointment caused to the Vicar gnawed sharply at Tim's conscience; but he could view with detachment his own emotions. He tried to think of himself as a great sinner, but failed, remaining desperately sorry for the Vicar, desperately sorry for Ivy, but unrepentant of the actual offence.

The crass exactitudes of our social system, its shibboleths and hypocrisies, fermented windily. Perhaps he had always been a rebel, questioning in his heart of hearts the *dicta* and injunctions of priests and teachers? Why were young people given appetites quite as strong and as importunate as hunger and thirst if, in some reasonable way, they were not intended to satisfy them?

Subdue the flesh!

Why?

Intemperance in any gross form was, of course, beastly. Tim detested gluttons and winebibbers. But this terrible, unspeakable sin of his and Ivy's. Why was it terrible, why unmentionable in polite circles?

He was not old enough or wise enough to answer such questions. Accordingly, he laid them aside, sadly puzzled and distressed because life was so difficult and mysterious.

The coarse talk in the foc'sle, while it offended his ears, soothed his conscience. Everybody knew that he was a gentleman's son, who had bolted from a too tempestuous petticoat. Tim would have been a fool had he not perceived that he was regarded by his fellows as a lively young

spark. What he had done found favour in their sight. They demanded details, and were sulky when Tim refused to gratify salacious curiosities.

The food, like the talk, turned his stomach at first, but soon he learned to wolf it with the rest, just as he learned to smoke pungent, acrid tobacco.

He won respect with his fists, although pounded to a jelly by a man bigger and stronger than Heavy Shoulders. This fellow was continually sneering at the "gentleman" and playing dirty tricks on him, unmentionable pranks. His name was Nazro, and he came from Massachusetts, a gaunt, big-boned Yankee, a bull of a man, with raucous, bellowing voice, and a huge foot ever ready to kick a man less powerful than himself, and a fist as ready to fall upon heads thicker than his own. A bully, and yet brave, brave as Nelson when a hurricane howled, and Death grinned up aloft at the end of a yard!

Tim stood it as long as he could; then he fought like a wildcat; and was half killed. When he recovered consciousness, Nazro jeered at him:

"That gal you was stuck on thought you the h—ll of a fine feller! Pity she can't see you now."

Tim staggered up; his eyes were battered, but the fire had not gone out of them. He limped towards his conqueror.

"I've one more word to say to you."

"Thunder! You want another lickin'?"

"No; that's why I'm talking now. I fought you fairly and was thrashed. I sha'n't fight fairly next time."

The men present pricked up their ears. Nazro grinned.

"You've a nerve, you sucker, you!"

Tim spoke distinctly:

"If you play any more beastly tricks on me, I shall wait till your back is turned, and then I'll split your bull's head open with anything that is handy."

"I kin see you doin' it."

"No, you won't. You'll see ten thousand stars."

Nazro perceived that the boy meant it. Once again quality confronted quantity, and quality prevailed. Nazro let Tim alone; after a time they became friends.

Thus Tim lived and learned.

The circle of his sympathies grew larger. The hands for'ard talked nauseatingly of women, and in particular of those forlorn creatures whom Tim had been brought up to consider as utterly lost, and quite beyond the pale of respect or real esteem. Nevertheless, these rough, brutally outspoken men made Tim realise that the Mollies and Dollies of the waterfront possessed fine qualities: charity —which covereth many sins—pluck, and even fidelity. Tim held his peace, marvelling at human nature, and conscious of a strange expanding. He was not yet weaned from Pennington pap as he sucked in this strong drink from the hairy breasts of strong men.

Their strength appealed to him enormously. When he staggered on deck, after his bout of sea-sickness, he was amazed at the change. Everything was shipshape and clean. The litter and lumber had been stowed away; the decks and gear had been miraculously cleansed by the great seas.

And it seemed to be so with the men. A gale of wind, not yet passed, had cleansed them. Eyes were less bleary; skins grew cleaner. At the bo'sun's pipe, the hands sprang up, alert and eager, ready for any task that might be imposed, but it takes nearly three weeks to wash the beer out of most of them.

He learned another lesson, the rule of thumb, so to speak, which constitutes the code of ethics of the poor, a code jealously guarded, for the simple—who are not so simple as they seem—repeat like parrots what the gentle expect them to say, what the gentle have dinned into their patient ears during countless generations. Tim discovered the truth when he became of the poor, poorer than they, inasmuch as he was ignorant of their crafts so laboriously acquired. His ignorance of knowledge vital to them seemed

at first immeasurable, infinitely greater than their ignorance of Latin and Greek and mathematics.

This was the rule of thumb:—

Fortitude is reckoned by those who go down to the sea in ships to be a greater virtue than chastity; generosity soars high above justice; courage, that king virtue, is greater than truth or even love. Tim salted down this new text: "And now abideth three things, Health and Luck and Pluck, and the greatest of these is Pluck!"

III

The Cassandra struck a hurricane on the lower edge of the Bay, a genuine Biscayer, when the tempest ruled supreme, and even the huge waves were flattened by its violence, unable to raise their angry crests, crouching like sullen hounds. The great ship became the plaything of the gale, a broken-winged bird upon the waters, hove-to under close-reefed topsails, drifting ever to leeward, while the Skipper cursed and the men for'ard swapped stories as dirty as the weather.

But Tim was not frightened, and this conviction fortified him. Every gallant youth wonders how he will feel and what he will do in moments of deadly peril. As a rule circumstances constrain him to do nothing, which chafes to madness his sensibilities. Tommy Atkins, on his tummy, fingering the trigger of his rifle, but sternly commanded not to pull it, whilst the shrapnel is screaming overhead, knows what the deadly sickness of inaction is. Jack, snug in the foc'sle, when the green seas are awash from stem to stern, and the wind howls a "Thanatopsis," may and often does cut his joke, but his heart shrivels within him.

Tim's heart did not shrivel when the green seas were awash from stem to stern. If the bo'sun's pipe sounded, he donned his oilskins and seaboots, and rushed riotously into action. At that moment he regretted nothing except

his ignorance, but he did his best to learn, and he learned fast.

Fine weather followed; and *The Cassandra* moved majestically upon an even keel, carrying every stitch of canvas, even her skysails. She was steel-built, of the early eighties, a miracle of speed and symmetry, handled by a master, with the right men under him.

Tim expected to be bored, but his hands and mind were everlastingly busy; at night he slept soundly and dreamlessly, falling dog-tired into his hard bunk, but awaking fresh and invigorated, keen as a hound for a fresh trail, eager to beat his mates at their own game. His neck thickened; his chest expanded; his muscles became hard as hickory.

The past had faded, like the distant woods upon the Solent. He gazed joyously into the future. His ambitions, for the moment, fluttered like petrels upon the high seas. To command such a ship as *The Cassandra,* to be lord of his own life and the lives of others, to sail on and on through cloud and sunshine—this surely was worth the doing, a nobler task than administering justice to half-famished Hindus, and cramming Western ideas down Eastern throats, with a liver twice its normal size, and a complexion the colour of dirty skilly!

Nazro and he talked together.

The New Englander was first and last a seaman, who had served his apprenticeship cod-fishing upon the banks of Newfoundland. He feared neither man nor devil, was a liar of the first magnitude, and something of a humourist. Tim loved his lies, because they indicated a perfervid imagination and a quality as yet strange to him, essentially transpontine, a desire to shine before other men as your true salt of the world, your pickled, pickling swashbuckler, the irrepressible buccaneer!

A Captain Kidd of a fellow!

"You mark me, you sucker, you! Geysers and Gizzards! Ain't you green?"

"It's coming out in the wash," said Tim modestly.

"You bet! Wal, sonny, I was greener than you onct. I was the greenest boy on the Banks. That's a dead cold fact, and somethin' to cheer ye up. But I was always full o' ginger, as you air. That's why I waste my time talkin' to ye. Handsome, too. The girls couldn't keep their hands off me. I was merried a dozen times before I was thirty! Yes, sir, a bigamist! I blazed my trail through the wimmenfolk from Maine to Californy."

"From the North Pole to the South?"

"You grin at me, and I'll wager no girl'll ever grin at you agen. Now, I've done with the petticoats. Fed up with 'em. Drink has mastered me. I can drink more bad liquor than any man on earth, and never shew it. I was a champion eater onct. Yes, I was. Consumed eighteen eggs, three Porterhouse steaks and a leg o' mutton at one sittin', and as a starter I hed to down a dozen sugared oysters. Ever eat a sugared oyster?"

"Never."

"One 'd make ye bring up yer liver and lights! Yes, sir, I've bin cock o' many walks. What I don't know ain't wuth knowin'. And I'll learn ye some of it, because yer full o' snap. Yer ignerunce fatigues me awful."

"You are very kind."

"I ain't. I'm the h—ll of a feller, a rag'lar devil. I seen the devil in you when you swore to cut my head open. I cottoned to ye then and there. Say, what you mean to do when we fetch 'Frisco?"

"I don't know."

"Course ye don't. Likely as not ye'll be shanghaied the first night, and wake up to find yerself in blue water agen, in a ship compared to which this yere is a young ladies' seminary."

"Perhaps you will steer me a bit."

"I will. Any hankerin' after gold dust? It's a mug's game, minin', but some of 'em strike it. I found one o' the biggest nuggets in Australia, bigger'n my head. I blew

that nugget in three days, and was King o' Melbourne for precisely that length o' time."

"Isn't mining played out in California?"

"Wal, it is and it isn't. Californy is the Golden State, but the gold don't come out o' the placers as it did, and t'other sort o' mining comes high. Kin you ride?"

"A little."

"I kin ride anything with hair on. I was a bronchobuster once. I mind me of a bucking pinto that threw every cowboy that climbed on to its back inside o' two minutes by the clock. I rode that devil round and round a corral fer twelve hours without stoppin'! The boys sat on the rail, and slung cup-custards at us, which I scraped off and swallered to keep my strength up. Ever hear the like o' that?"

"Never."

"The trouble with me, sonny, is this. I was born to the sea, and I can't live off it. The sea keeps me straight, keeps me out o' the Penitentiary. No women at sea, and mighty little drink."

"But you said you'd given up women?"

Nazro rolled a melancholy eye.

"That's truth. But they won't give me up. They help themselves—see? It's a crool combination, women an' drink! You put that into the barrel fer keeps! Druv me into terrible crimes. I've robbed stages; held up trains. That's why I'm here, sonny, far from sheriffs and their cursed depities, a-talkin' to you and tryin' to work the greenness outer yer!"

"I'm ever so much obliged," said Tim.

IV

Tull, the first mate, threw crumbs of talk to our hero, which he ate and digested at his leisure. First mates, by the nature of sea things, cannot engage in conversation with foremast hands. Tull, however, kept an eye on the boy,

and chuckled to himself when he perceived that Tim did his duty with alacrity, and showed far greater aptitude than any of the apprentices, whom Tull condemned in words not to be repeated.

Tull was the antithesis of Nazro, an honest sea-dog, not a sea-wolf with fangs sharpened to slash. Tull had a reverence for the great waters and all therein and thereon which Nazro would have scoffed at. He had begun life, like Nazro, as a fisherman, and then had served a long apprenticeship before the mast. He knew a ship as some skippers never learn to know her, regarding her not as a vehicle for Traffics and Discoveries, but as a sentient being answering to the voice and hand of Man. Often rebellious and intractable, but obedient to her master in the end. Tull, perhaps, was the only man of *The Cassandra* who recognised Tim as a gentleman, and took him seriously as such. Probably the good fellow had been born in some village not unlike Little Pennington.

"Coming on fine, you are," he would say, in the middle watch, when Tim was at the wheel. This praise filled Tim with pleasure.

"Thank you, sir."

"Nice perlite boy! Stick to that—the perliteness, I mean. It pays even in the foc'sle. So Nazro licked you, hay?"

"Yes, sir."

"He's rotten bad, is Nazro, but not so black as he paints himself, my lad. A very gifted liar! And a fine example of what not to be. Been homesick, hay?"

"It has passed, sir."

"Good!"

He would walk away after such meetings, grunting to himself and grinning. Then, perhaps, he would turn, and raise a warning finger:

"Don't you go and forget, my lad, all that they taught you over there," indicating the right and tight little island with a wave of his vast hand.

Tim wondered whether he was forgetting. Little Pen-

nington remained as a soft blur upon his horizon growing more and more indistinct. Anything would divert his thoughts from it, a school of flying fish or porpoises, an albatross, the sight of another ship, unless it happened to be homeward bound.

When he hinted slyly to Tull that he thought of adopting the sea as a profession, the old shell-back eyed him up and down somewhat derisively:

"Ho! I dessay you'd like to command a clipper?"

"By Jove, I should!"

"'Tain't everybody's job, my lad; and a hard life, too."

"You like it, sir?"

"I lump it, boy. Take it as it comes, rough and smooth, and more rough than smooth. Be in no hurry! The right job comes to the right man, or he goes to it. Never knowed an exception to that rule."

"I'm keen about it, sir."

"Aye! Keen and green. The two sail together. You'll be less keen when the greenness goes."

Tim candidly admitted that he was green. He was oddly pleased with himself for taking the name temporarily! When would he change it for another?

"I shall never be White again," he thought.

Had he been born white? What truth was there in this seemingly monstrous doctrine of Original Sin? Must the child of sinners be born a sinner? Obviously, the Vicar, dear saint, was cocksure of it. Because of this conviction had he not strained himself to breaking point in his efforts to conquer heredity with environment?

Was he a very grievous sinner? Why did Nazro acclaim the devil in him?

Such thoughts do not pester healthy, active young men. Tim dismissed them lightly, but they returned like homing doves. They swooped upon him in calm weather, when the canvas flapped idly from the yards, and the sea became a blue carpet, and the work to be done exacted muscle, not mind.

He had written to the Vicar upon the morning he sailed from Southampton, telling him that he had assumed the name of Green. The answer to that letter, and other letters, would await him at San Francisco. He wondered whether the scandal had leaked out. Did Sir Gilbert know? What would he say? By Jove! Wasn't a fellow well out of this horrid mess?

And Ivy, who hated him?

Journey was right; the fact that she hated him proved her light and heartless, an animal. But he thought of her often, contrasting and comparing her with the Jills belonging to the Jacks in the foc'sle. Heavens! She did not shine out above such odorous comparisons!

Had he really loved her?

This was a knotty question, hard to be unravelled. For a season he had been mad about her, willing to make any sacrifices. He could think of her tenderly still, and of her burden.

But, try as he would, he could not visualise himself as a father.

V

The Cassandra made her southing gallantly, crossing the Line thirty days out from Southampton, and heading swiftly for the Calms of Capricorn. Father Neptune did not come aboard, so Tim was spared some man-handling and buffoonery. But he was by now active enough to go aloft by the chain runners of the topsail halliards, hand over hand; and he knew nearly as much about running gear as the youngest apprentice, which is feeble praise.

Tim began to long for another storm. Nazro smiled complacently:

"I know the feelin', you young sucker. It claws at one; it ain't to be denied. You'll hev it worse ashore."

"What do you mean?"

"You wait, Mister Green! Wait till yer foot strikes the

water front o' 'Frisco, and you feel money in yer pocket, and Tiger Town is up yonder, and the big saloons. Won't you sail bang into the storm then? I wonder!"

"I think not," said Tim.

"You wait, my young chick! Storm? Gizzards and Corsets! The wind from places I know'll blow the sticks bang outer ye."

And he laughed again more riotously than before.

Tim edged away from him, hating his evil face and his leering eyes.

"None of that for me," thought Tim. Nazro pursued him.

"Scared, eh? Wal, sonny, I'll tell ye this. Don't you be a baby, whinin' afore yer hurt."

"I have been hurt."

"Pshaw! Scratched—that's all. Waitin' fer a blow, air ye? Right! Let yerself rip when it does blow. Clap on all sail—and scoot! That's life; that's suthin' wuth waitin' fer. Calms is for old women and children. Ain't yer tumbled to that yet?"

"Not yet," said Tim.

The bo'sun piped.

Nazro sprang to attention, listening. The wind was drumming hard upon the great mainsail, and above that deep diapason booming rose the shrilling of stays and backstays, high notes of distress, no more to be mistaken than the swift fall of the glass.

"We're in fer a reg'lar out-'n-outer," said Nazro. "I've smelled it comin' fer an hour past."

VI

"All hands aloft! Up you go! Be lively!"

The Skipper had a fault which all stout seamen will excuse. He hated to shorten sail till the last moment, loathed it as a man may loathe the clipping of an eagle's wings.

Beside Tim was a young man, named Preble, the son of a petty tradesman in Southampton, a long, lank youth, better equipped to put sand in sugar than into his own heart. He muttered to Tim nervously:

"Ain't this awful? I'm all of a tremble."

Tim cursed him.

"Get the topsails off her!" shouted the Skipper.

"Oh, Lord!" squeaked Preble.

The bo'sun bawled his orders, blowing his whistle lustily. Soon Tim sprang up the fore-rigging, followed gingerly by Preble. The wind was terrific. The men crawled out upon the yard-arm, tugging at the canvas till their fingers bled. The great sail came in slowly, reluctantly, defying the strong, gripping hands.

"I can't stand it much longer," groaned Preble.

"You must, you fool!" shouted Tim. The boy was drunk with excitement, but he, too, knew that his muscles were being strained beyond endurance, that either he or the ship must conquer, and the sail's victory might mean death to such as Preble. A violent squall shook *The Cassandra,* as a terrier shakes a rat. Tim heard a ghastly scream, loud above the infernal din of the gale. Preble had disappeared. He might have fallen overboard, or crashed on to the deck below. Nazro, furling at the bunt, with the second greaser, yelled savagely: "Claw her in, you lubbers!" Tim felt deadly sick. He remembered that he had cursed Preble.

Yet they went on with that cruel fight against the roaring wind till they ceased to be men and became machines, automatic hawlers and grabbers, obeying orders and knowing that disobedience or slackness stood for destruction. They got the sail in and made it fast with the gaskets.

When, at long last, they got down on deck, there was Preble, dead. They carried him into the foc'sle. The thin body was crushed to a pulp. He had fallen upon his feet; and his head remained uninjured. Tim could hardly believe that he had died a violent death.

Next day, the gale was over. The Skipper read the burial service, and his mates slid the shattered corpse into the deep. They sold Preble's duds at the mainmast—and forgot him!

Oh! It was good to be alive after that, to feel the spray and wind upon one's cheek, and the red blood pulsing through one's veins!

CHAPTER II

DREGS

I

IN due time *The Cassandra* dropped anchor in Golden Gate Bay, and Tim saw Mount Tamalpais and Diablo rising out of a soft mist which obscured the crudities and ugliness of the water-front.

The voyage was over. Soon he would go ashore, a free man, with the new world holding out enticing arms and the old world far away! The run from the Horn to the Farallon Islands had been barren of incident. They had sailed smoothly and swiftly upon summer seas, bespeaking few vessels, alone upon the vast Pacific. Towards the end Tim felt bored. And when he smelt the land he told himself that his ambition to command a clipper lay dead in the deep, like poor Preble.

When they were berthed alongside the wharf, Tull took him aside.

"Look ye here, my lad. Cut loose from Nazro at once. Here's the address of a decent boarding-house uptown. You keep away from the water-front and its saloons, unless you want to be drugged and crimped."

"I don't, sir."

"Then you mind what I say. I reckon there'll be letters for you at the post-office."

"I hope so."

"You read 'em afore you do anything else. Freeze tight on to your bit o' cash. Earn more, my lad. Work'll keep you out of mischief."

"I can't thank you enough, sir, for all your kindness. I wouldn't have missed this experience for anything."

"It's made a man of you."

It had—in every sense. When Tim put on his shore togs, he realised how much he had grown. They might have belonged to a younger brother. He felt as if he would burst out of them if he sneezed. And putting them on was an amazing adventure, whirling him out of one world into another. Through a white collar much too tight he beheld Little Pennington clearly, with sharpest definition. The evil-smelling foc'sle grew dim. As his fingers fumbled at his necktie, he thought of Daffy, who was particular about such gear. The shortness of his trousers annoyed him. He became the Etonian as he stared at his scarred, tar-engrained hands.

Everybody in the foc'sle knew what Nazro was going to do with his time and money. He said complacently:

"Yes, boys, I'm hell bent fer a snorter. I shall paint this yere little burg my own partic'lar purple. I'm pinin' fer a game o' faro. I'm jest achin' fer a partic'lar brand o' whiskey punch which a barkeep I know has the secret o' makin'. I shall down a dozen of 'em straight, jest to see if I've lost the gift of holdin' liquor. Gizzards! won't I make things sit up and howl to-night!"

Tim parted soberly from his mates, wondering perhaps when and where he might meet them again. Some of them would herd together till the last cent was "blued." Then they would take up their life again, find themselves homeward bound, ready to be cleansed afresh. Never would they or could they escape from the old seaways, the paths which they must tread till the end.

Tim gripped their horny hands and bade them "good-bye" and "good luck."

II

He found a packet of letters at the post-office, which he read alone in his room at the boarding-house uptown. The

Vicar's letter was read first. It had been written a month previously, two months after Tim's departure.

"My dear boy:—

"I am trying to picture you as you read this letter after the great experiences through which you have passed. I know that bitterness must have been washed out of you as it has out of me. And now you are alone and in a great city. May God be with you!

"I send you fifty pounds. It will suffice to bring you home, Tim, if you wish to return home. That is as you decide. My house is yours. Remember that!

"You will be grieved to hear that we have lost our old friend, Sir Gilbert. He passed away quietly at Christmas, after a sharp attack of pneumonia. It must be well with him, for his whole life was a preparation for death. His son reigns in his stead.

"There are no other changes. The scandal which drove you to sea leaked out, as I feared it would. Like all other scandals, it will fade away. Ivy Jellicoe is being cared for. The unhappy girl is hardened and indifferent, like her father. I blame myself bitterly for bringing her to this house.

"And now, my dear boy, what shall I say to you? I ask myself if I did ill in telling you the truth. I must assume the responsibility, which is a burden to me. And yet, apart from any cloying sentiment, I realise that something stronger than personal feeling made me tell you that truth, which I might have withheld had I foreseen the possibility of your tearing yourself adrift from me and the influences of this village. It is too late, now, to dwell upon that.

"Tim, as your father in spirit, as one who has your welfare nearer to his heart than anything else, I entreat you to let that truth strengthen you. You have inherited great qualities, the qualities which may carry you to the heights. You have inherited, alas! great disabilities, which may drag you down to the depths. Because you are stronger and handsomer and cleverer than your fellows, the fight ahead will be the more strenuous. But I

should be false to every clause in my creed if I did not believe steadfastly that good, ultimately, triumphs over evil. Nourish the good within you, and it will drive out the evil! Start afresh! At this moment I seem to see you at your best, clean and strong and free, out of the bondage of men spiritually and mentally your inferiors, gazing unblinkingly into the sunshine of California, ready to fly, eager to fly fast and far! Let that flight be upward!

"Write to me as soon as possible.

"Your loving father,

"TERTIUS WHITE."

Tim sat still upon the edge of a narrow bed staring at the scholar's fine script. He, also, could see the Vicar at his desk, writing slowly, casting and re-casting each sentence in his mind before he transferred it to paper. Now and again he would pause to glance at the spire.

Tim fingered the cheque for fifty pounds. The Vicar was a poor man. Fifty pounds meant self-denial, a more rigorous cheese-paring in a household kept simply and frugally.

He decided to return the fifty pounds at once.

Should he take it back? That meant working his passage round the Horn again. And then?

The scandal had leaked out. Could he face the blameless village? Not yet.

He glanced at his other letters. There was one from Eustace Pomfret. He guessed accurately enough what that good fellow would say. There were two or three small Christmas bills. The Vicar had paid them. At the bottom of the small pile lay a square envelope. With a gasp of astonishment, Tim recognised Daffy's writing. He tore it open and glanced at the date. It had been written about a week after he left England—

"DARLING TIM,

"I have just made a perfectly hateful discovery. You wrote to me and I never saw the letter. I am wild with

rage about it. Annie" (Daffy's eldest sister) "said something which roused my suspicions. I rushed to mother and just wormed the truth out of her, but your letter had been burnt. Mother took it upon herself to answer for me. I can easily guess what she said. Oh, Tim, what must you have thought of me! I am so miserable! And I'm writing this against mother's wish, secretly. Tim, darling, I am true to you, and I know you are true to me. Perhaps you aren't. You must think me such a rotter. Please write at once, and put me out of my misery. Everything is perfectly hateful and miserable. I think nothing of your being sacked from Eton, nothing at all. It was beastly hard luck your getting caught! I'm quite sure you weren't drunk, as Mother hints.

"Please write by return!

"Your own,
"DAFFY."

Tim re-read the letter with throbbing pulses. Then he glanced again at the square envelope. It was inscribed *Private*. Upon the back the Vicar had written something in pencil. Obviously, he had not opened the envelope, for a big red seal was intact, but he knew Daffy's handwriting. This was his comment: "Mrs. Carmichael knows about Ivy Jellicoe."

III

Some of the language acquired at the foc'sle dropped from Tim's quivering lips. He felt flattened out by the bludgeonings of Fate.

Such a small thing had queered his pitch. Let us try to reproduce his thoughts, as they bubbled out of his mind through a much enlarged vocabulary. If Daffy had received his letter and answered it, he would have resisted the beguilements of Ivy. He knew that. Daffy had stood between him and other temptations. Why didn't he guess? Why didn't he give the darling credit for a fidelity and

pluck which he knew to be hers? She was barely sixteen, but what of that?

Let dogs defile the grave of Mrs. Carmichael!

And now it was too late. Daffy knew the disgusting truth. He could hear the mother discreetly telling the story, bowdlerising parts of it, the essential parts, but obliterating for ever and ever the image of Tim as it lay enshrined in a maiden's bosom.

"This is the worst," said Tim, pacing up and down his tiny room, wild with misery and rage.

He was tempted to dash his head against the wall till he fell senseless. He had seen a Sicilian do this in the foc'sle of *The Cassandra*. How he despised the silly idiot!

What a sickening business life was!

He flung open a window, and looked out over San Francisco. He could see that vast caravanserai, the Palace Hotel, and the *Chronicle* skyscraper beside it, overtopping all other buildings. Cable cars, quite new to him, were speeding up a steep hill. The traffic of Market Street boomed in his ears. His first impression was that of pace. Even the foot-passengers, men and women, pushed along swiftly, as if keen to reach their destinations.

He must join them, push on with them, and find a way out of his miseries.

Within a minute he was striding up Market Street, heading west, towards the declining sun.

Great cities, like great rivers, have their unmistakable characteristics. Some appear to be eternally old; a few remain eternally young. Each has its individual smell, its atmosphere, its definite sounds. If you approach London by river, you get the taste of it in your mouth, before you recognise St. Paul's. But, possibly, of great cities, San Francisco is—or used to be—the most amazing amalgam, whilst remaining essentially itself. When Tim first looked upon Mount Tamalpais hardly thirty-five years had elapsed since the discovery of gold in California. The city he beheld had been built during that period of time, built by

and for all sorts and conditions of men. Spaniards, Italians, Frenchmen and Chinese lived in their own quarters, pursuing their avocations regardless of the ever-encroaching Anglo-Saxon. It was a city, in a sense, of reconcilable differences. Next to a plutocrat's palace might be seen a board-and-batten shanty. The men occupying such contrasted habitations might have come West together. One had risen; the other had not. Evidences of really sordid poverty were hard to find; but the rich and the poor, generally speaking, had not yet drifted apart. It was Cosmopolis, with a sharp pleasant flavour of Bohemia. Amongst other cities, it stood out as being shamelessly wicked, because Vice had not yet slunk out of sight. Vice, indeed, lived out of doors, and was the less pestilent and dangerous on that account. Values, in a word, those nice adjustments which an advanced civilisation imposes, were being computed slowly. The old-timers, who had become prosperous, hated to wipe out old landmarks. They loved the colour of the different quarters. Guides took curious strangers into opium dens and the like. Call it a "live and let live" city, and have done with it! Men were too busy minding their own affairs to bother greatly about the affairs of others.

Tim found his way to Golden Gate Park, not the ordered pleasance then that it is to-day. He sat down upon a bank.

Spring comes early to California and lingers long in its favoured spots. Spring was abroad this afternoon touching all things with her magical fingers. The Park, however, seemed to be deserted. Along the main roadway sped men in sulkies or light buggies driving fast trotters. Tim saw no women or children. He gave himself up to his thoughts.

Perhaps it was the first time in his life that he had felt absolutely alone.

IV

His love for Daffy was tearing at his mind and his senses. Critics—of life as they would desire it to be rather than the welter of haphazard variations and permutations which it is—may contend that Tim was only nineteen, and incapable at that age of intense feelings which do, unquestionably, spare the great majority of striplings. It may be said in reply that he was old beyond his years, and blessed or cursed with ardent inherited imaginations. Daffy had ceased to be the jolly little sweetheart. In her artless letter he had a glimpse, no more, of the woman latent in every female child. She stood to him as *The Woman,* the invisible, indescribable *She,* who has inspired poets and painters for all time. Daffy, he told himself, possessed the mysterious power of whirling him outside himself, of exalting him to heights, of firing him to supreme endeavour.

And he had lost her, because a mother, acting within accorded rights, had suppressed a letter.

It never occurred to him till long afterwards that Daffy might forgive him. In that regard Little Pennington had accomplished its task only too well. Daffy, poor darling, would accept the verdict of the only world she knew. She would be revolted, beholding her hero metamorphosed by Circe into a swine.

V

The fog rolled in from the ocean. Tim returned to his boarding-house and tried to choke down some food. Then he wandered again into the streets full of well-dressed, cheery persons on their way to theatres and other places of entertainment. San Francisco by night was nearly as gay as Paris, but not so brightly illuminated. A seedy individual approached him, trying to conceal a furtive, hang-dog air.

"Like to see the sights, sir?"

"What sights?"

"China-town."

"Beastly place, I've heard."

"Take you round for a dollar. Here's my badge. I'm O.K., an authorised guide. You'll be quite safe with me. I'll shew you Hell."

"Thank you, Mr. O. Kay, I've been there this afternoon. Good-night!"

He pushed on, leaving the man staring after him. Across the road was a famous saloon, embellished by many pictures. Tim went in and called for a cocktail. Opposite the bar was a free-lunch counter piled high with food. Men of the better class drank and nibbled and chattered. Their talk, to which Tim listened, concerned itself mainly with business, with *propositions*. Every man had a "proposition" of sorts. Obviously, California bristled with opportunities. Things seemed to be humming.

"Biggest bonanza I ever struck," he heard one silk-hatted but short-coated individual remark. "Finest land in the State. And the water handy to make it bloom like the rose! Put you in on the ground floor."

"I'm up against a bigger thing," replied his companion. "You read this."

He thrust a pamphlet into the other's hand, and assumed an expectant attitude, with his cigar cocked at an angle of 45 degrees.

Upon a red velvet lounge sat three young men, tourists and Englishmen. They were talking of sport, of the fishing to be found in British Columbia. Tim began to listen to them, to find pleasure and envy in their familiar phrases. One of them turned presently, and stared hard.

"Hullo!" he said, rising. "Surely you're Tim White?"

When he spoke Tim recognised an Etonian, an Oppidan and a distinguished cricketer.

"I'm Tim Green."

"Tim—*Green?* Same old joker! What are you doing here?"

"Landed this morning."

"It's jolly to see you again. Going round the world, as I am?"

Tim smiled derisively.

"Not quite as you are, Wynne. I've worked my way round the Horn, before the mast!"

"Suffering Moses! I say, you fellows, come over here. Let me introduce an old Eton pal. Mr. Keppel—Sir Harry Jocelyn—Mr. Timothy White."

"Green," said Tim gravely.

The others laughed, not taking Tim seriously. Wynne recited the astounding fact that Tim had worked his way to San Francisco before the mast. He ended up:

"What a bird! He got sacked for nipping out of College at night. We were awfully sick about it. Round the Horn! I say, that takes a bit of doin'."

Tim's face relaxed. Wynne continued genially:

"You look as fit as a fiddle, and hard as nails. Jove! I'd sooner drink with you than fight. Round the Horn! Phew-w-w!"

"Any adventures?" asked Keppel.

"None."

"I'll bet you held your own," said Wynne. "Look here, old chap, you've got to spend the evening with us. We'll whoop things up a bit, and listen to your yarns. We've a box at the Tivoli, and they're doing *The Mikado.* I saw it nineteen times in London. Come on!"

Tim hesitated, glancing at his clothes. Wynne laughed gaily:

"You have grown out of 'em, Tim, but we don't care a rush about your duds, if we can have the man inside 'em."

"You can have what's left of him," said Tim.

"There seems to be quite a lot left," said Keppel, with his eyes upon Tim's bulging muscles. He was frail of

build, not likely to make old bones, the senior by some years of the others and evidently in command. He added courteously: "I am glad you can join us."

VI

They spent a joyous evening. Tim had never seen the famous opera. It whirled him temporarily to Japan, and thence to London, as he reflected bitterly that his companions had means and leisure for such enjoyments and what they stood for. Later the four supped at the *Poodle Dog*. Wynne said:

"We must drink White's health in something fizzy. Hi, you! a bottle of wine."

Out West a bottle of wine means champagne.

Jocelyn spoke of his own country, Dorset. Tim remembered that the Carmichaels lived not far from Dorchester. He said carelessly:

"Do you know the Carmichaels?"

"Quite well. Charming people. The little girl, Daphne, is a fizzer, likely to be a beauty, and as jolly and clever as they make 'em. She hunts with the Cattistock and goes like a bird. Men are buzzing about her already."

"Are they?" said Tim, gulping down his champagne.

"Do you know them, White?"

"Oh, yes; they lived in our village, Little Pennington."

Wynne added:

"White's father is the Vicar of Little Pennington." He glanced at Tim. "I can remember your telling us about the happy village, and all the saints."

Tim's collar felt at least three sizes too small for him, as the desire gripped him to deny Wynne's statement. He wanted to say: "Look here, the Vicar of Little Pennington is the best friend I have in the world, but he's not my father." He became very red, as he controlled a twitching tongue.

"What can we do now?" asked Wynne.

The head waiter, a lively Frenchman, shrugged his shoulders.

"Ces Messieurs desirent un plongeon?"

"Un plongeon?"

"Sapristi! You can plonge into ze dives."

"Let's dive," said Wynne.

They did so, plunging from the cool breezes of Kearney Street into an atmosphere reeking of tobacco smoke and humanity. A large hall was full of men, sitting on benches and at small tables.

"Like a box, genelmen? Hall's kinder crowded."

"A box, by all means," said Wynne.

They were ushered into a large box, meretriciously upholstered with red velvet and practicable curtains. It was above the stage upon which some girls were dancing. They looked up and smiled as the young men entered.

"What will you take to drink?" asked the waitress.

"Beer," replied Keppel.

Wynne looked about him, laughing:

"I say, you fellows, this is the best of the dives. What's the worst like, eh?"

"We won't try to find out," said Keppel.

Tim looked at the four girls on the stage. They were young and fairly pretty, raddled with powder and paint. They glanced and danced at him audaciously.

"Hullo, Tim," exclaimed the vivacious Wynne. "You've mashed the quartette, by Jove!"

"They'll be up here in a jiffy," said Keppel. "We'll give 'em a drink and let 'em go. They get a percentage on the drinks," he explained.

"Poor little devils," said Wynne.

As soon as the "turn" was over, the quartette appeared, taking for granted that they were welcome. But they looked slightly contemptuous when they were invited to drink beer. The prettiest and sauciest said to Tim:

"We took you for wine-drinking sports."

At this Keppel, who had paid dearly for his experience, said politely:

"What do you make on a couple of bottles of champagne?"

"Quit that!"

"I'm dead serious. Come, how much?"

One of the girls laughed and named the amount. Keppel gave her some money, saying pleasantly:

"There you are! Sit down and talk. Business before pleasure."

The prettiest girl said to Tim:

"I like you, boytie—sure!"

Tim thought of Ivy, and then of Daffy. He had been warmed to the core by good food and sparkling wine; and he had not spoken to a girl for three months. But he felt in an instant sick and sore. He replied hoarsely:

"Don't waste your time on me."

She pinched his arm.

"My! what a muscle. Say, girls, just feel his arm! What a shoulder-striker!"

The quartette fell riotously upon Tim, who defended himself as best he could. A voice from the hall yelled out:

"No scrappin' allowed, except on the stage."

Everybody applauded this, and stared at the stage box. Keppel said incisively:

"You girls behave, or we shall hook it."

Order was restored. Tim pulled a pencil from his pocket and made caricatures of the girls upon the programme at which they screamed with laughter. Keppel said:

"By Jove, you have a talent. Can't you turn it to account?"

One of the girls answered:

"Say—you see our boss. There's money in it. Make drawin's like that of fellers in the audience. My! I forgot you was a toff."

"I am not," said Tim, but it never occurred to him then that either Keppel or the girl spoke seriously.

Presently duty summoned the young ladies back to the stage, whereupon Keppel observed meaningly:

"Let's skedaddle before they come back. It will make things easier for them and us."

Jocelyn wished to stay, spoke of "making a night of it," but wiser counsels prevailed. Tim kept silence, but he was thinking of what Nazro had said. Something within him urged him to fling dull care to the winds, to sail into a gale of excitement, to drink, to make love, to forget.

The young men walked back to the Palace Hotel. On parting, Wynne whispered to Tim:

"Where are your diggings? I'll look you up to-morrow morning. I want a yarn alone with you."

Tim named his boarding-house.

"Ask for Green."

"Why, wasn't that a joke?"

"Not much."

VII

Tim pondered many things in his heart as he turned from the magnificent hotel to seek his own drab lodgings. He had laughed and jested with the others, paid in full his shot for a cheery evening, and now it was over. His friends of a night were flitting across the Pacific to China and Japan. Did he wish that he was going with them? He tried to answer the question which included so much. If he could be as they——? Keppel had the air of one not too well pleased with himself. Jocelyn and Wynne were jolly boys, evidently young men of great possessions, flinging money about right and left. Tim had a splendid vision of a promising servant of the Indian Civil Service, persona grata to Mother Carmichael, on his way to the Orient, where preferment and lakhs of rupees awaited him, a Tom Tiddler's ground strewn with gold and silver!

"I'm green indeed," he groaned.

He was. At that moment, quite unconsciously, he ex-

hibited the colour to two loafers. Lost in his thoughts he lost his way, taking the wrong turning out of Market Street, sauntering head down, into an ill-lighted side alley. The loafers pursued noiselessly. Tim's gloomy thoughts were put to flight by a stunning blow on the head.

He had been sandbagged!

CHAPTER III

POPPIES AND MANDRAGORA

I

HE returned to consciousness to find a policeman bending over him. Tim's head felt larger than the dome of St. Paul's, and his body seemed to have vanished. But soon he realised that nothing was missing except a watch, all his money, and the gold links which Sir Gilbert had given to him. The policeman supported him to the boarding-house, and put him to bed, but held out no hopes of capturing the sandbaggers or recovering the loot. A ray of light illumined the darkness; the Vicar's cheque still lay in the Vicar's letter at the bottom of the drawer into which Tim had thrust it before he took the road to the Golden Gate Park. The policeman made reasonably sure that Tim was not much the worse for a blow with a stocking filled with sand, and then took his leave, promising to return on the morrow.

"Yer derby hat saved you from concussion—see?"

"Yes."

That was a bit of luck. Before rushing out of the Vicarage, Tim had looked for a cap and not found it. He remembered jamming on his billy-cock.

Next morning, he lay in bed with a severe headache, the object of solicitude on the part of his landlady, when she learned what had befallen her handsome lodger. Tim told her about the cheque, which may have warmed the cockles of a heart beating hard to earn a living.

He was still in bed when Wynne came in, almost envious when he heard of the misadventure. Wynne wanted to

fetch a doctor, but Tim assured the kind fellow that he was right as rain, an apt simile in a land of dry seasons. Wynne sat down, glancing nervously at his old schoolfellow.

"I say," he began awkwardly, "I wish you'd confide in me. A nailing good sort like you doesn't ship before the mast for nothing."

Tim said evasively:

"You're a nailing good sort, Wynne, and the others, your pals, are like you."

"How queerly you say that!"

"Do I?" He looked keenly at Wynne. "What do *you* call a nailing good sort?"

Wynne laughed.

"I'm serious. Try to answer the question. I've a reason for asking. What, in your opinion, is a nailing good sort?"

"I'm dashed if I ever thought about it."

"Think about it now."

The mental effort was almost too much for Wynne. He murmured tentatively:

"He ought to be keen at games and sport, and—and straight."

"What do you mean by—straight?"

"You know. Decently clean and—er—all the rest of it."

"Would you call a man decently clean who got a servant in his father's house into trouble and then bolted?"

"Oh, Lord! Did you do that?"

Tim nodded.

"Fouled your own nest?"

The familiar expression, often heard at Eton, thawed some secrecies and reserves of youth. Tim said hotly:

"We always called it that, didn't we? But do you suppose that I did it deliberately?"

"No."

Tim continued:

"And yet, if I had sneaked up to town and taken the usual broad and easy way, that would have been *deliberate* sin; and then Little Pennington would have asked no questions. My greatest offence was disturbing their holy peace. I feel it in all my bones."

Then he told his story, got it "off his chest," as he put it, a mighty relief. From your knowledge of the boy, you ought to divine that he used no special plea, attempted no extenuations. Perhaps Wynne supplied these. Tim spoke, too, of the Vicar's misery and horror, suppressing, of course, the truth about the saint's marriage. He concluded mournfully:

"I am wretched, because I made him wretched; I grow hot with shame when I think of Ivy's shame, which I cannot take away or lessen, but, thank Heaven, I feel about the accursed affair as I did about being sacked from Eton. I have not been worse than thousands of other fellows, only more unlucky. Now you have it."

"What a beastly mess!" groaned Wynne. "Knocked bang out of the India Civil! Oh, damn it!"

"Yes—damn it! There doesn't seem much else to say."

The policeman interrupted this confidential talk. He made a few notes in a greasy pocketbook.

"Accordin' to Hoyle," he said, apologetically, "we shan't never cop 'em. You was mighty green to go a-saunterin' down that thar alley alone after midnight."

"I'm one of the green things of this earth," said Tim; "and I can bless and magnify the Lord that you found me and looked after me. Wynne, the Labourer is worthy of more than his hire."

He winked at Wynne, who responded. The policeman vanished, smiling blandly. Wynne said hastily:

"Look here, let me help you with—with money. I've lots. And you're cleaned out, aren't you?"

"I have a cheque, but I'd like to send it back. No, no, I can't take money from you."

"I simply insist. What rot!"

Tim shut his eyes and considered. Wynne murmured persuasively:

"Please!"

"What did you give that policeman?"

"Five dollars!"

"No wonder he smiled! Wynne, old man, you're a trump, and I'll take twenty pounds off you, if you can spare it, and return it, too. That I swear." Tim sat up in bed, speaking more excitedly. "I've not much left but pride. And this will drive me to work; work is what I want."

"You can have more than that, Tim. I can spare it easily."

"No; ten might do, but I don't want the horror of being penniless hanging over me. Odd thing your turning up in the nick of time! Often I think that we're just leaves tossed about by the winds, and then an affair like this forces me to dream again of guardian angels and all that. Don't tell him, but Keppel was a sort of guardian angel last night. Say good-bye to 'em for me."

"But you'll dine with us to-night?"

"Don't tempt me! Being with you fellows and hearing the old talk tries me too high. Leave your address with the money."

"Right. I advise you to lie snug in bed. Sleep off that knock."

"Not much."

He sprang out of bed, and stood upright, squaring his great shoulders, expanding his chest. He was wearing a skin-tight jersey. Wynne opened wide his eyes.

"You are a—corker. Built from the ground up, the perfect man, what?"

Tim laughed scornfully. Presently Wynne went away. Years passed before they met again. But, after the young men had sailed for Japan, a portmanteau arrived at Tim's lodgings with a note—

"Dear old Man,

"Don't be too proud to accept what we send. You bolted without clothes, and we have too many. Our excess charges would make you fairly sit up!

"Carry a stiff tail, Tim. The luck will turn.

"Yours ever,

"W."

The portmanteau contained a complete kit. Tim dropped some tears, as he unpacked these sweet-smelling oblations with the scent of heather upon the homespun. And the kindly gift imposed more than mere acceptance. The tag, noblesse oblige, is pinned, sometimes, to an old dress coat. Excess charges had not been altogether wasted upon the garments which Wynne and Co. left behind in California.

II

That afternoon, Tim slipped on his foc'sle duds, and went down to the water-front to hunt work. He was not long in finding it, for muscle was at a premium in those days. He engaged himself to help unload a timber schooner from Mendocino County. The boss who hired him for the next day said curtly:

"Buy a pair of leather gloves."

Tim held out his hands.

"Do I need 'em?"

"You bet."

After that, he hung about the wharves, eyeing critically the various craft, queer-looking schooners from the South Sea Islands, smelling villainously, coast tramps, fishing smacks, and half a dozen yachts of small tonnage. His headache passed; he wished that he was at work, earning big fat dollars wherewith to pay back Wynne. Then he sauntered past the saloons, watching some of the men who reeled in and out of them. One big fellow staggered across

the road, singing at the top of his voice. Tim recognised Nazro, who, in his turn, hailed Tim boisterously:

"Have one with me, sonny?" He jerked his thumb in the direction of a saloon. Tim declined. Nazro swore prodigiously, ending up:

"You'll drink with me, you young swine, or fight."

"Then I'll fight, old man."

Nazro changed the tune:

"That all's hunky, Tim; I was pullin' yer leg, see? I'm drunk and proud of it! The rest o' the boys are lyin' paralysed in Shaughnessy's back parlour. I've drunk 'em stiff, by thunder! I'm the King, I am."

"No monarch, I hope, was ever so tight as you are, Nazro."

He passed on, pursued by a volley of bad language.

III

Tim never forgot the three days that followed. Every muscle in his magnificent young body was strained terribly, handling the big six-by-fours. Two men in the gang chucked work at mid-day. Tim blessed the boss for his timely advice. Even with gloves his hands were torn and bruised. And yet, as he sweated and toiled, his soul sang within him, for he was driving out the devils who counselled him to spend Wynne's money and the Vicar's cheque in one tremendous spree. Let those who have passed through this ordeal testify to the temptation! Lest he might yield to it on the morrow, when his limbs would be stiff and tormented, he wrote that night to the Vicar, sending back the cheque. When it was posted, he felt almost happy.

"I shall come home," he wrote, "when I have made good. Meanwhile, I shall work at anything that turns up. I want to find myself, and your letter has helped me to set about the job. I was never so well in all my life, although I was sandbagged last night. They talk of knocking sense

into a man's head. The sandbaggers knocked sense into mine. Your loving son, Tim."

After three days' labour, he rested, wandering about the city, absorbing items of interest to himself. In Montgomery Street he found a real-estate office, with a show window filled with gigantic vegetables: enormous pumpkins, colossal cabbages and onions. These astounding products of the Golden State came, so he was informed, from a valley in San Lorenzo county, which lies some two hundred and fifty miles to the south of the metropolis, and may be reached by rail now, by water then. Tim, after flattening his nose against the big plate glass window, walked into the office, and listened eagerly to a voluble, red-faced agent, who talked as if his mouth were filled with too ripe fruit. His patter amused and edified Tim.

"You're a Britisher. Well, sir, I'm glad to make your acquaintance. You've struck us at the psychological moment. Things are booming, and real estate up and down the coast is advancing by leaps and bounds. Any information or service required will be promptly extended to you. Ain't them pumpkins immense? Never struck a better 'ad.' Yes, sir, I'm glad of this opportunity of clasping you by the hand. I'd love to make you acquainted with the romance of our history, the salubrity of our climate, the vastness of our resources, and the beauty and grandeur of our scenery. . . ."

He paused to recover his breath. Tim said soberly:

"Yes; California seems to be a nice little place. If it is all you crack it up to be, I shall buy it."

The red-faced agent laughed, expressing a willingness to "set 'em up." But he went on talking.

Tim escaped after half an hour, saturated with information, and pockets stuffed with "printed matter." In his room at the boarding-house he read the pamphlets. Fortunes were to be made anywhere and everywhere. Poultry-keeping, bee-keeping, horticulture, viticulture, agriculture,

horse-, cattle-, and hog-raising were indicated as so many broad avenues to Fortune.

Tim's vivid imagination dealt faithfully with the "facts," facts culled from prominent citizens, male and female. One white Aylesbury duck, the property of Mrs. Caroline P. Bützberger, had laid one hundred eggs in one season, which had duly matured into ninety-seven ducklings, sold when six weeks old for ninety-seven dollars, less freight, in the San Francisco market! Michael McMurphy, from one acre of land, for which he had paid five dollars, harvested a net profit of one hundred dollars, raising Early Rose potatoes. Miss Lauretta Gump had made a small fortune out of roses.

Tim sucked it all in, a baby at the breasts of teeming Nature.

IV

Green he was; and the verdancy within sought verdancies without: green grass, green trees, green wheat and corn. The captious may ask why this young man preferred to work with his hands instead of putting to service brains deemed bright enough to satisfy the Civil Service Commissioners. But, at the moment, muscle commanded a better wage. Tim could earn three dollars a day with his hands. A reporter in the boarding-house, a clever young man, with a knowledge of a special business, earned ten dollars a week. A clerk in a bank or a counting-house, if he were competent, might draw a salary of a hundred dollars a month, and could save nothing out of it. Tim had the salt of the high seas still in his blood; he wanted sunshine and rain, roaring winds and soft zephyrs, the pulsing life out of doors, with its adventures and misadventures.

For a month he worked hard on and about the water-front, saving money, living simply, finding sufficient entertainment and instruction in studying men with whom he came in contact. At night, he would don Jocelyn's blue serge suit, and go to the big saloon where he got a drink for

twenty-five cents, and a capital supper for nothing. One of the bar-tenders was an Englishman, a some-time gentleman, late of the Broken Brigade, who knew the slope from San Diego to Seattle. Tim asked him:

"Ought I to sponge a meal here regularly?"

The mixer of many drinks replied promptly:

"The chuck is there, good stuff, too. Ground bait, of course, for thirsty fish. You take your whack at it."

He talked with his landlady, the widow of a "rustler" and a "rustler" herself. She kept a motherly eye on Tim without his suspecting it, preaching the gospel of work. From her lips he heard the ancient wheeze: "The gentlemen of leisure out here are called tramps."

Tim grinned. He had a kindly feeling for tramps. He could understand a man slipping his fetters, escaping from the bondage of labour into the vagabondage of the road, wandering on and on, obedient only to Fancy.

Finally, he worked his way south to San Lorenzo by sea. The old mission town was still distinctively Spanish in appearance, but the Spanish-Californians, that pleasure-loving race, were being driven from the big ranchos. Tim wandered into the local real-estate office, where a burly agent mistook him for a man of means, with capital to invest. When he learned the truth, he counselled Tim to visit a fellow-countryman who was clearing a tract of land with a view to planting out vines and fruit trees. Tim decided to take this advice.

April had come to California. The Spring in Tim leapt up joyously to meet the Spring of the year. During these early days, Daffy ruled his thoughts concerning women. He looked up to her once more as his star, now immensely remote, shining upon him with clear cold beam. "I must win up to Daffy," he told himself, "but how—how?"

The mercury within him rose and fell intermittently.

V

He passed several months working for the Englishman who was clearing cheap land. This middle-aged tenderfoot had a wife and two sons. They were a cheery family, and Tim soon loved them, entering with ardour into their ambitions, which included a return to England within the near future. The father, Harvey Cooke, was an impassioned optimist with weak lungs. He had come to Southern California for the climate, bringing with him what he could scrape together, a few thousand pounds. He was clever, worldly-wise, and full of resource, but helplessly ignorant of farming, at the mercy of neighbours and foreman, who robbed him mercilessly. Nevertheless, like everybody else, he was prospering. His land had trebled in value; his health had been restored. He planted the wrong trees in the wrong soil, "botched" everything he touched; and then laughed gaily at his blunders.

"God made the land, but the Devil sent the Cookes."

"And others," said Tim.

He enjoyed himself vastly well, becoming a Jack-of-all-trades, carpenter, painter, paper-hanger, plough-boy, cow-boy, and horticulturist.

Holidays were frequent as the feasts in the Roman Catholic calendar. Quail swarmed in the brush hills; the marshes by the sea held snipe and duck innumerable; in the sand, at low tide, clams could be dug, and transformed into toothsome chowder.

Why not become a market-hunter on a colossal scale? Harvey Cooke proved himself a true prophet.

"Market-hunting will be knocked on the head, or else the game will be wiped out."

Tim wrote to the Vicar, and received letters from him. In due time he learned that Ivy was a mother. Tim lay awake thinking of the baby, unable to measure his half-interest in the atom, unable to assume paternal responsibili-

ties, and yet queerly sensible of tiny hands clutching at his heart and eyes—were they brown or blue—mutely gazing into his eyes, full of helpless interrogation. Ought he to write to Ivy? And if he did, what could he say?

In many ways you must think of him as older than his years. He looked a man, and stroked a small silky moustache. He spoke as a man, having an inherited gift of the gab. He felt as a man, when he talked with women; and the daughters of the Golden West made it plain that they liked to talk with him.

VI

He returned Wynne's loan, joyously uplifted at doing so.

Suddenly, he found himself once more foot-loose, with the wide world before him. Cooke sold his ranch and left San Lorenzo county. He spoke to Tim of buying or building a hotel, to be run upon solidly English lines.

Then he and his vanished, as people do in a new country, to pop up again with startling unexpectedness.

Tim wandered on to the bunch-grass ranges, and became a cow-boy. With the chappareros, he assumed the manners and speech of the young vaquero, turning up his pantaloons over high heeled boots, wearing a white silk neckerchief, and a vast sombrero, a bit of a buck as all broncho-busters should be.

The life was hard, tough as the hondo of Tim's lariat, the rawhide rope which hung at the horn of his big, deep-seated saddle. He learned to make a lariat out of a steer's hide, and to throw it accurately. Each morning he rode into the brown foothills.

At mid-day he returned to the ranch house, to devour as swiftly as possible beans and bacon, and a big chunk of apple or pumpkin pie, with a lump of cheese on the same plate as the pie, and three cups of coarse tea diluted with tinned milk and sweetened with cheap sugar. After smoking a couple of cigarettes he would fare forth again upon

a fresh horse. He was on a big unfenced range; and certain cattle were his peculiar care. He came to know them and their habits intimately. And he learned in time to sit a bucking horse, and brand a wild steer single-handed. Such arts interested him for a season, but the life was deadly dull. Twice a year the spring and fall rodeos (round-ups) varied the monotony. Cattlemen and cattle dealers assembled together, outvying each other at a bargain. The fat steers were cut out; the calves branded, and the festival ended with a big barbecue and feats of horsemanship.

Every two months, regularly, the "boys" would "strike" town, and a "bust" followed. Few cowboys save money. The real right thing, so Tim discovered, was to hand over your "wad" to the bar-keeper of a saloon, with the injunction: "Say, you keep that, and lemme know when it's gone." It went very soon. Strangers were invited to step up to the bar and drink; a good deal of glass was broken, and, occasionally, a head or two. Now and again there might be some shooting, and the comment, if such an affair ended seriously, was:

"It don't pay to fool with Pete," or words to that effect. Pete, in such cases, escaped scot free, if he could shew that his antagonist was "heeled."

Upon one of these occasions, Tim furnished an object lesson in personal violence, which established his reputation on the ranges as a strong man. Two cowboys, stout healthy fellows, were hammering each other in a saloon. Tim was called upon to separate them. He took each man by the collar, wrenched them apart, brought their two heads together with a crash, and whirled them asunder again. Each man reeled back against the nearest wall, and fell stunned. They admitted cheerfully, when they recovered consciousness, that the drinks were "on them." Nobody was more surprised than Tim himself.

As a rule, like most very powerful men, he kept out of these fights, but he still cherished the conviction that it was his duty, as an Englishman, to strike any man, drunk

or sober, who called him names. The foreman of the ranch let fall a word of advice which Tim ignored or forgot—

"It's like this, Tim. If a drunken galoot calls you a liar it don't make you one, does it?"

"I allow no man to call me a liar."

"Go easy, you tenderfoot, you! Do you want to kill the man as calls you names?"

"Hardly."

"Wal, you mark this. If you strike a feller in this yere country, and he's heeled or carries a knife, he'll try to kill you, and, by Gum! you may have to choose between killing him, or being killed. That's all."

It was sound advice, kindly offered. About a year afterwards Tim was imbibing bad whiskey with some cowboys from a Spanish grant; two of them were greasers. One of the latter addressed Tim savagely, using a term never mentioned by the men of the West without, as Owen Wister says, an accompanying smile. The greaser did not smile. Tim knocked him down. The man got up, approached Tim, and slipped a knife into him.

Tim was carried to the County Hospital, which served, also, as a poor-house, where he came within an ace of giving up the ghost. Loss of blood had made him unconscious. He drifted back to consciousness to find himself in a cool, white-washed room, containing half a dozen beds. A woman was bending over him, saying:

"Now, you keep quiet. You've been badly hurt. Lie still. Let me do the talking."

She told him where he was, and that he might reckon upon being carefully tended. Tim's eyes wandered round the room. One of the beds just opposite to his was screened. He asked dazedly:

"Why don't I have a nice cute little screen?"

The nurse said indiscreetly:

"You're not bad enough for that."

Tom's wits quickened.

"I see. We're allowed to die in private?"

The nurse nodded, with a finger on her lip, enjoining silence. Tim moved. And then the room became dim, and the face of the nurse melted into the shadows. When he returned to earth again, screens were round his bed!

The fact smote him. So—he was condemned, was he? Toes tucked up! Golden slippers all ready! Not much! He'd fool the whole silly crowd—and live.

Possibly this tremendous determination not to leave a jolly world kept him in it after two doctors had declared emphatically that he must go. He mended slowly from that hour.

During convalescence, he made the acquaintance of a man past middle life whom we will call the Sage, a name Tim found for him. The boy thought of him as the Sage, or the Ancient. He was incurably ill, but able to talk. Tim was amazed at the quality of his talk, till it leaked out that the Sage had been a fellow of his College. Why had he gone under, this man of many and brilliant parts? Why was he lying derelict in the county hospital of San Lorenzo. Tim never knew.

We record some of the Sage's babblings. They were hardly more than that. He was old and very tired. Tim told him part of his story.

"Yes; yes; made a fool of yourself with a rag and a bone and a hank of hair. Who wrote that? I read it somewhere lately, the words of a boy who was born a man."

"Never heard 'em," said Tim, for Kipling had not yet swum into his ken.

"I forget names. I lie here thinking of abstractions, my own experiences mostly, whether good or evil. Made a fool of yourself, did you?"

"Foolishness?" asked Tim grimly. "Little Pennington called it by another name."

"I daresay. Vice is often folly, although folly is not often vice. Good and evil," he sighed drearily; "they are so relative, aren't they? So dependent upon time and

place and temperament. I am at the end of my tether, boy, and it has been a long one. I'm ready for the last adventure."

He closed his eyes and fell asleep.

Later, Tim spoke of San Francisco. Perhaps he ought to have sought work there, brain-work. The Sage shook his head:

"All great cities are sad, boy. Pleasure sparkles on the surface, spume of the deep sea! and catches the eyes of fools. For joy you must go to the country, to the wild places, the mountains and forests. I trapped in the woods of the north; I was quite alone during a blessed winter. I was happy; I loved it."

And again:

"Suffer and grow strong."

But if suffering imposed weakness? Tim thought of Preble relaxing his grip——!

The Sage was thinking when he spoke to Tim of death:

"It generally is, and ought to be easy, if a man has lived his life. I was present once at the deathbed of a friend who was esteemed a shining example. He remained all his years in a tiny circle, a celibate from choice. He drew down the blinds between himself and everything that offended a curiously fastidious and refined mind. His end was unhappy. He told me, towards the last, that he regarded himself as a vegetable, a weed upon Lethe's wharf. It really worried him that his life had been so admirably correct. He went reluctantly. Somehow peace at the end fled from him."

Next day, the Sage died.

But he had lived. Tim knew that, and became filled with a curiosity that was never slaked.

"Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas!"

Juvenal's tag came into his mind. To remain all one's life in cotton wool, in a snug partition, like a blown Great Auk's egg with never a crack in it, to be looked at, perhaps, as a rare specimen of virtue never put to the proof,

to be labelled, classified, reduced to a common order, to be spoken of with hushed, reverential whispers as a "museum specimen," was this life?

On leaving the hospital, he found himself weak as an anæmic girl and almost penniless. Incidentally, his place on the range had been filled up.

"I shall tramp it a bit," thought Tim. Before leaving San Lorenzo, he overhauled his portmanteau, shelved in a small hotel kept by a Frenchman. The moth had ravaged Jocelyn's blue serge suit, cut by a famous snip. Tim pondered the obvious moral:

"Has the moth got into me?"

He bought a light pair of blankets, and made them up into a loop, through which he put his head; the upper part rested upon his left shoulder, and the lower reached to his right hip. Carrying a small valise, he took the road.

CHAPTER IV

AGUA CALIENTE

I

WANDERING south through Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties, Tim supported himself fairly well by doing odd jobs—splitting stovewood, haying and harvesting, night-watching in a big hotel, that dreariest of vigils, working on a "gravel train" (ballasting a railroad track), picking up few dollars but much experience. His heels became abnormally sore, so bad at last that he had to lie up in a small country inn. Being invited to inscribe his name in the hotel register, he wrote:

"W. W. Green."

The young lady in charge of the office smiled. The stranger limped, but he was very handsome.

"Are you ashamed," she asked, "of your first names that you don't write them down?"

"Oh, dear, no!"

"What are your first names?"

"William Weary. What are yours?"

She laughed, tossing a coquettish head.

"My name is Gladys Adéle Fitch, but my intimate friends call me Dellie." She added pleasantly: "You do limp some, but you don't look very weary, Mr. Green."

"Looks are deceptive," replied Tim. "You don't look very, very good, Miss Fitch, but I'm sure you are."

Obviously she was flirtatious, but Tim failed to respond after a promising opening. He hated to be pursued, remembering Ivy and her beguiling: "Oh, I do like you!" Many women had looked boldly or bashfully into his eyes;

and always he was sensible of a queer revulsion, partly of the flesh and partly of the spirit. Ivy had rolled him in the dust. There were many Ivys in the world. He encountered them everywhere. Journey predicted that they would come to his whistling; but they came without it.

At this inn he spent what was left of his money, and, finally, had to take the road again before his heels were fit for tramping. Hard times followed. He became for a season a hobo, and owed much to the kindness and charity of a professional called Ginger. Ginger was what is known as a "poke out." He belonged to the great majority of hoboes who accept, neither humbly nor gratefully, cold food handed out at the back door. The toffs of the profession are termed "set-downers." To be a set-downer exacts great gifts. A set-down earns by his wits three solid hot meals a day.

Ginger was a tall, thin, lantern-jawed fellow, with a merry eye. When he felt in good spirits, he would say to Tim: "Gosh! pard, I kin taste meself this morning." He was sockless, but particular about his appearance. He carried a razor and a clothes brush, which served also as a hair brush, and he wore a double change, two coats, two flannel shirts and two pairs of trousers.

He did most of the battering (begging), saying genially: "Now, pard, what would you fancy this morning? Chicken *à la* Maryland? Waffles with maple syrup? A cut o' salmon?" Then he would shamble off to return presently with some cold potatoes and broken meat. Tea would be boiled up in an old tomato can, and the knights of the road would fall to.

Ginger taught Tim how to beat his way by train without being beaten. They crawled under the cars and lay snug upon the "bumpers," the trucks which carry the wheels. Tim would hang on desperately with both hands, not daring to let go whilst the gravel and dirt pounded his face. The dust was awful, suffocating, but long distances were covered.

Tim, of course, was never of the hobo fraternity. He preferred to work for a meal instead of battering it, much to Ginger's disgust. Unhappily, Tim couldn't work for nearly three months. His health had failed. If he attempted manual labour he would break at once into a profuse perspiration, followed by violent sickness and a racking headache.

He was "on his uppers."

Gradually his health came back. Ginger said solemnly: "If you mean to work, pard, we must part."

So they parted.

Was this sad experience wasted? Tim had learned the adjustment of ways to means and means to ends, the patter of the road fell fluently from his lips, and the songs of the sockless.

Had he sunk or risen? Answer that question, if ye can, ye fledglings in cosy nests to whom grumbling comes easier than song.

Kindly remember that he had not yet recovered his strength. The greaser's knife had bled him white, but not to the whiteness of the happy village. His ambitions remained in abeyance.

Presently, he drifted across roughish water into the placid, pellucid bay of Avalon. He became for a summer's season, a beachcomber, living on and by the beach in a small tent, teaching trippers from the hot valleys beyond the Coast Range how to swim, and fish, and pull an oar.

In Avalon strength and high health became his again. And, also, the desire to win up to his star, to snatch her from the skies. In an illustrated weekly, he saw a picture, and beneath it: *"One of this season's fairest débutantes."* No tears came to his eyes, as he stared yearningly at Daffy's beautiful laughing face, at the deliciously curved lips that he had kissed. But blood seemed to be dripping out of his heart. The greaser's blade inflicted pangs less poignant, for the sublime and ridiculous meet and mingle in a young

man's heart, and tragedy underlies the fact that youth cannot distinguish between them.

There are wild goats in the island of Catalina. Tim put up a sign outside his tent:

"Tim Green is an expert goat-hunter, and a dead shot; but it's always *your* goat."

Tourists from the East returned home with trophies when they engaged Tim.

After a time he grew bored with summer seas and glass-bottomed boats, through which folks peered at the wonders of the deep. He thought to himself: "A good gale would shake them and me up. I must get out of this."

When the trippers returned at the end of September to their malarious valleys, Tim left Avalon, and wandered back to Santa Barbara county. He had saved a little money, about as much as a son of Dives may spend on an evening's entertainment. Tim carried his cash in a canvas belt snug upon his skin—insurance against starvation.

During that winter—if you call the pleasantest season of the Southern California year by so harsh a name—he worked for a Spaniard, Don Clodomiro Maria Arellanes, who did little manual work himself, being content to sit beneath a fig tree and meditate upon the past, when he and his lived patriarchally to the sound of guitar and mandolin, lords of the earth and the fullness thereof, owners of countless horses and cattle, of leagues of land now cut up and mutilated by barb-wire. Arellanes and his daughter occupied an adobe, the last of many possessions. With the adobe went a few acres of rich valley, and a creek gushing generously in the dryest years. There was also an orchard, and a sulphur spring. The place was called Agua Caliente. At the back of this small paradise stretched a wilderness of chaparral and manzanita to which Don Clodomiro owned no title save that of possession, a title never disputed as yet. But, at the time when Tim engaged himself, a hungry horde of squatters was invading the

wilderness, lured on by the reading of just such pamphlets as had captivated Tim. The squatters, poor souls! believed that these brush hills, hitherto the sanctuary of the coyote and rattlesnake, could be transformed into vineyards and orchards.

They came in thousands, driving horses as thin and hungry as themselves, with bedraggled, prolific wives sitting beside them, men from bleeding Kansas and the mid-West, blown out of the cornland by cyclone and blizzard, soured fellows, maimed and frost-bitten, with a tiny flame alight in their chilled souls, the hope that somewhere, anywhere, they might find a homestead. To all of them, Southern California had been pictured as Canaan.

Don Clodomiro swore softly in Spanish when the pilgrims began to take up claims upon the rough hills which he regarded inalienably as his. Argument was wasted upon this quiet, courteous gentleman. The hills were his long before Uncle Sam had pinned a patent to them. Had not his grandfather obtained a grant from the illustrious Gobernador Alvarado, the boundaries to be defined by a horseman galloping helter-skelter from one peak to another? And a title to this wilderness might have been confirmed by Uncle Sam, had the "diseño" been submitted to the Commissioners appointed to confirm such vague documents.

Tim developed an affection for both father and daughter. They were dear, simple gentlepeople, in spite of poverty, some dirt, and an amazing ignorance. Magdalena had been educated in a convent; returning home to wash and cook and sweep. She was engaging and graceful rather than beautiful; but her eyes were lovely, limpid brown pools with golden flecks in them, as if tiny sunbeams had found their way into cool shadows and there remained. Don Clodomiro adored her. She was small, delicately fashioned, with exquisite hands and feet, and only sixteen, when Tim came to Agua Caliente.

Tim treated her as if she were a jolly little sister; and

he praised her cooking, as well he might, for she concocted wonderful Spanish dishes, savoury guisados, chiles rellenos (stuffed chiles), tomales and enchiladas. A great pot of beans always stood on the table, and in an outhouse hung strings of sun-dried venison, a sort of jerky, and onions and red peppers. Magdalena, also, without any special knowledge, seemed to have a gift for poultry-breeding. She looked charming when she was feeding her ducklings and chickens and turkey poults.

Tim became very Spanish. He learned to chatter in that language as fluently as Magdalena, and she taught him how to play the guitar, and to sing pathetic love songs. There was one in particular with a haunting refrain:

"Adios, adios, para siempre—adios!"

Tim never heard this line without reflecting that it was the swan-song of the Spanish-Californians, a farewell to the wonderful land of sunshine, which had once belonged to them, for such pleasure-loving folk were vanishing, even as the Indians had vanished, slowly fading out of a landscape which became duller and more drab for their passing.

He learned much from these Latins, contrasting their patience, good-humour, and happiness in simple things with the nervous, forceful, overworked Anglo-Saxons, never satisfied with existing conditions, bowing down and worshipping the Moloch of Progress, doffing their hats to the snorting, smoke-belching locomotive as the symbol of a triumphant civilisation. From the porch of his adobe, which crowned a hill, Don Clodomiro could behold the splendid Jesus Maria rancho, which had once belonged to him and his fathers. Now, the sweeping, parklike pastures were dotted with hideous frame houses and huge barns lying like blots upon the softly-tinted foothills upon which his cattle and horses had grazed.

No complaints leaked from Don Clodomiro's lips, when he spoke of the times "before the Gringo came," but Tim divined that in his heart smouldered a passionate protest

and resentment, the stronger because an iron pride suppressed it.

II

A year passed swiftly and happily. Tim's wages were not paid regularly nor in full, but he did not care, for he had found a home, and everything sensuous and artistic in him leapt up joyously to acclaim peace and beauty and rest.

During this year some of the brush hills at the back of Agua Caliente were taken up by squatters, but these claims were far from the adobe, and it seemed probable that the squatters would desert them and move on. Don Clodomiro cursed them magnificently as he rolled his cigarettes, and remained under his fig tree. Tim urged upon him a masterly inactivity, knowing that the squatters could be evicted not by law nor by force, but by Nature herself.

And then, the inevitable happened.

A prairie-schooner rolled up to Agua Caliente containing the Bannons. Bannon was a rough and tough Missourian, a Piker of aggressive type. He selected a claim within Don Clodomiro's fence, and staked it out.

"Teem," said Don Clodomiro, "you come with me. I must talk to this dog. Virgen Santisima! I shall say, Teem, what I think, and you will be my weetness."

"Bully for you," said Tim. "We'll scare the liver out of him."

They went together to the barn, and saddled up two horses. In the distance Magdalena was flitting about, feeding her chickens. The father gazed at her fondly; then he said to Tim:

"My Magdalena! what a darling! So good, so pretty, so loving, Teem?"

"All that and more," replied Tim.

Don Clodomiro pulled at his beard. He was not fifty but his beard had grizzled.

"Eef there should be trouble——?"

"Yes?"

"Eef, Teem, this son of a gun, this Bannon, should get the drop on me——?"

"Not he."

"My boy, I speak soberly. I have seen——! Ay de mi! I have seen, I say, good men of my race shot down by the Gringos, who are quick, ohé! how quick they are to kill! My brother Sebastian, he die like that in Monterey, and my cousin, Estrada."

"If he kills you, I'll kill him."

"Teem, you are a good Teem. I no think of that. I think of my Magdalena, mi querida. Look you, this is between ourselves. One day my Magdalena will be reech."

"Rich?" echoed Tim.

"The Agua Caliente and the sulphur spring are mine. I have United States patent. In that hill is bitumen, mi amigo, and somewhere is oil. Always I have known that. And so I have held tight to the old homestead, because one day the Gringos will build a monster hotel here. Oh, yes! and the oil will flow, my Teem, and then Magdalena will be reech—reech!"

"By Jingo! I hope so."

"Now, Teem, if anything happen to me, it is for you to watch out for my darling. You are strong and clever. Yes, I know. You will watch out for Magdalena, eef this Bannon is too mooch for me? Is it not so?"

Tim grasped his hand.

"By God!" he said solemnly, "I will."

"That is all right. And now for the Señor Bannon. Dios! May he feed the turkey buzzards!"

"They wouldn't touch his filthy carcase," said Tim.

They rode down the hill, following a small creek, till they came to the prairie-schooner and a dirty tent. Upon the tent ropes were hanging frayed garments which fluttered in the breeze. A woman was washing out other gar-

ments in the creek. Don Clodomiro raised his sombrero and saluted her courteously.

"The Señor Bannon? Where is he, señora?"

The señora stared defiantly at the horsemen.

"If you mean Tom; he's asleep in the wagon. Call again!"

"No. I regret moch that I disturb the señor. Have the kindness to inform the señor that Don Clodomiro Arellanes desires to speak with heem."

The woman rose sullenly, walked to the tent and said shrilly: "Tom, here's a couple o' Dagos. I tole 'em you was asleep. Git up, and handle 'em yerself."

Arellanes pulled his beard. He murmured silkily to Tim:

"Hé, hé! We are Dagos, Teem. You hear that?"

Tim was brown as any Spaniard. He replied quickly:

"If you're a Dago, Don Clodomiro, I'm proud to be one, too."

The Señor Bannon lurched out of the tent, a big, raw-boned ruffian, half full of whiskey.

"You are the Señor Bannon?"

"I'm Tom Bannon. What you fellers want?"

He eyed them both with savage contempt. Don Clodomiro answered mildly:

"You have cut my fence, and staked out a claim upon my land."

Bannon laughed harshly.

"Yer land? That's good. That's a tale ter pitch ter suckers. It's Uncle Sam's land—and you know it. If ye don't know it, the county surveyor'll post ye. I ain't no tenderfoot, old whiskers, see? You own the spring, the adobe, and jest three hundred an' twenty acres o' land, the pick o' the township, too. I'm helpin' myself to my own. If ye've nothin' else ter say—git!"

"You have cut my fence, señor."

"I hev. I mean to cut more of it. Quit foolin', onless yer huntin' trouble."

"I say this. This señor here is my weetness."

"An' my wife is mine. Come right here, Mame."

Mrs. Bannon abandoned her washing reluctantly, standing with arms akimbo, staring at the horsemen, listening attentively with a sour smile upon her weather-beaten face. Half a dozen children, playing about the wagon, made up Don Clodomiro's audience. He spoke very quietly:

"You cut my fence again, Señor Bannon, and I shoot you, in my own way, and at my own time. I build my fence myself, with my own hands. It ees mine. I warn you fair and square."

"You go to hell!"

"Hasta luego," said the Don, raising his sombrero. "I waste no more words with you, señor."

He rode on, followed by Tim.

III

Nothing happened for several days. Afterwards, when Tim came to a better understanding of his fellow-men, he wondered why he had blundered so horribly in his estimate of Don Clodomiro's character and temperament. At the time he believed the quiet, gentle Spaniard to be bluffing; and he believed, also, that the bluff would not be called by such a stupid, blustering clown as Tom Bannon appeared to be.

At the end of the week, Magdalena left home to spend a few days in Santa Barbara. An old Indita took her place in the kitchen and corrals. The day before Magdalena left home the wire fence was cut in another place, but Tim did not connect the two incidents.

Upon the afternoon of Magdalena's departure, Tim was working in the orchard, when he heard a rifle shot. He went into the house, and perceived that Don Clodomiro's rifle, a heavy-barrelled Sharp of ancient pattern was missing. Tim became uneasy. His uneasiness increased when

the Spaniard appeared shortly afterwards carrying the rifle.

"Any luck?" asked Tim, lightly.

"I shoot a coyote, Teem."

He spoke so naturally that Tim's fears vanished. The Spaniard propped the rifle against an apple tree, and began to roll a cigarette. Tim saw that his thin brown fingers were trembling. Presently he went into the house, carrying the rifle with him. Tim worked on for about half an hour; then he slipped quietly into the adobe, and examined the rifle. An empty case still lay in the breech. Tim glanced about him furtively. Don Clodomiro was in his bedroom. Tim slipped the empty cartridge into his pocket, and then cleaned the rifle. He went back to his work as quietly as he came from it, but he was conscious of a mad excitement. He made certain that Don Clodomiro had sent Magdalena away, and had then despatched his enemy.

The two men met at supper, which was eaten in silence. Towards the end, Arellanes said abruptly:

"Teem, you like Magdalena?"

"Like her? You bet."

"It ees good."

The men smoked, whilst the Indita cleared away. It might have been eight o'clock, or thereabouts, when heavy steps were heard on the wooden porch, followed by a loud knocking on the door, which Don Clodomiro opened.

"Hands up—quick!"

Tim obeyed the familiar injunction. Arellanes never moved, smiling derisively at his visitors. All were masked, wearing masks made out of gunny-sacking.

"He's not heeled," gasped Tim. "Don't shoot!"

"What you men want?" asked Don Clodomiro. His voice was as gentle and suave as ever.

"We want you."

"Dios! And why?"

"Tie their hands, boys."

Arellanes offered no resistance, submitting quietly. Tim

submitted also. About a dozen men were in the room. The spokesman said curtly:

"This afternoon, along about five, Tom Bannon was shot dead in his tracks, shot jest inside yer fence," he turned his masked head toward Arellanes. "You murdered him, you damned Dago! In the presence of his pore wife, and this young man, who's a party to the crime, or I'm a liar, you threatened ter shoot him on sight, ef he cut yer fence."

"Oh, yes; I tell him that."

"He did cut yer fence ter git to his own land, an' to-day you shot him."

"It ees to be proved in a court of justice."

"It's going to be proved right here—and now. Search him, boys."

They did so, finding nothing. The leader picked up the rifle and opened the breech, glancing down the barrel.

"It's clean," he said. Involuntarily, Arellanes glanced at Tim, and that glance was a confession. Yes; Arellanes had shot Bannon.

"Search the young feller!"

Tim was searched. One of the searchers held up the empty cartridge.

"Give it here," commanded the leader.

He slipped the discharged cartridge into the rifle. Then he smelt the end of the barrel, and ran the tip of his little finger round the inside edge of it.

"Boys, that rifle was fired within a few hours; the powder ain't dry. He turned savagely to Tim: "Now, look ye here, you answer straight! What was this yere empty shell doin' in yer pocket?"

Tim lied recklessly:

"I had a shot at a coyote this—this morning. Then I cleaned the rifle, and I suppose I slipped that shell into my pocket."

"You hit the coyote."

"I—I missed it."

"Thought so. If you could ha' shown us the scalp we

might hev believed ye. Boys, this yere is a reg'lar put-up job o' murder, cold-blooded murder. The old man hadn't the nerve ter do it, so this young feller does it fer him. Those in favour of hangin' the two of 'em, here an' now, hold up their hands."

Some men held up two hands.

"One hand'll do, boys. Good! You air in favour of lynchin' 'em. You all know, fer a cold fact, that in this yere cow-country any man with a pull kin git off a charge of murder in the first degree. You all know that the sheriff ain't hed to hang a man since he's held office. This Arellanes has a pull. If we let the law o' the land deal with him, he'll escape. If ye feel jest as I do, hold up yer hands 'agen."

Arellanes remained silent. Tim said excitedly:

"I'm a British subject. I've never taken out my naturalisation papers. You boys had better be careful."

"A Britisher? Ye look like a Dago. A Britisher?" He laughed savagely. "That makes it easier. We don't want no Dagoes nor no Britishers either in Gawd's country."

Don Clodomiro spoke slowly:

"Teem is innocent. He works for me."

"Innocent? About as innocent as you air! March 'em out, boys. The nearest live-oak'll do."

"You damned curs and cowards," said Tim.

IV

They were marched out, and down the hill till a suitable place of execution was found. Arellanes said nothing; his face was pale but impassive. Perhaps he was reserving his powers, concentrating all energies upon the last supreme appeal. Two hair ropes were produced and prepared. Tim began to tremble; and then he swore to himself that he would die like a man. The luck had gone dead against him—from the first. It struck him as almost absurd that

he might be dead in five minutes. Where would he be in ten? A scene from his early childhood flashed into his mind with startling vividness. His nurse had reported him to the Vicar for some mischievous act. The Vicar lifted him on to his knee, and said: "You know, Tim, you and I are the only two men in this house. Aren't you giving more than your fair share of the trouble?" He had swelled into a man then, and now he was a child for a brief instant. His thoughts swooped from the past into the future. He saw the Vicar's face whiten and wither, as the brutal blow struck him. He might well believe that murder had been done—and expiated. Daffy might see a paragraph in the morning paper: "Young Englishman lynched in California." He thought of Preble, who had screamed horribly. He would not scream. Already he felt suffocating; his tongue swelled; his mouth was parched; a bitter taste filled it. Why the devil didn't they hurry up and do the trick? He had a glimpse, no more, of his mother's picture. She had borne him for this.

The voice of the leader seemed to float from immeasurable distances.

"Anything to say?"

"Yes, señor," replied Arellanes. He spoke with extraordinary dignity and solemnity, weighing his words. "You mean to kill me, and I—Clodomiro Maria Arellanes—am ready. I am a good Catholic, señors, and I am prepared to die. I knew that Bannon would kill me, eef I didn't kill him. And I killed him this afternoon. But Teem, he know nothing. But when I come back, he suspect. Yes; I see that he suspect me. I go to my room, to—I am not ashamed of that—to pray. Teem, he look at the rifle, he clean it, and he slip the shell into his pocket. Is it possible, I ask you, that a guilty man should do a thing so foolish, so senseless? and Teem, he have plenty of sense. Kill me, but let Teem go."

There was silence. Tim knew that his life hung upon a

word, a nod. The sweat broke out upon his skin. Arellanes continued, as clearly and composedly as before:

"Señors, I have a daughter. She is away from home. Perhaps I send her from Agua Caliente because I know trouble is coming to my house. Let Teem go to her. She will need a man. Some of you are fathers, no? Then you will understand. I have spoken."

The leader stood silent; some of the others whispered. Tim could guess what might be said. *Dead men tell no tales.* How often he had read that line in some boy's story of adventure! And now he applied it to himself, recognising the inexorable truth of it. Suddenly, the leader spoke:

"The old man has confessed, and he must hang, as a warning to others. We squatters have no dollars to waste in lawsuits. The boy may or may not be a party, but fer me I believe he ain't. But he may make trouble fer us. I'm willin' ter risk that."

"Same here," said a voice.

"Those in favour of hangin' the boy hold up their hands!"

Two hands shot up; then three; then a fourth. Tim felt that the others were wavering. Possibly, the leader realised his tremendous responsibility.

"Cut him loose," he said.

Tim was released.

"Come you here," said the leader, in his muffled voice. Tim approached.

"You skin outer this—quick. Go to the girl; she'll need ye. Saddle yer plug and—scoot! And be mighty keerful how you talk o' this yere act o' justice. Ye don't know us, but, by God! we know you. Git!"

"Good-bye, Teem," said Arellanes.

Tim went up to him with the tears raining down his face. He was utterly unstrung, trembling, hardly able to speak. The moon had risen; and he could see clearly the face of

Magdalena's father, the impassive, finely cut features, the strange quiet eyes, deep pools without sun-flecks in them.

"Embrace me, my son," he spoke in Spanish.

Tim kissed his cold cheek and remembered afterwards how cold it was.

"Embrace my Magdalena for me. May the Blessed Virgin protect you and her! Adios!"

CHAPTER V

MAGDALENA

I

MAGDALENA was crooning a love song when Tim galloped into Santa Barbara. During that long ride from Agua Caliente he had wondered how he should break the appalling news. Being little more than a boy, he ignored the instinct of women, their amazing divination. Long afterwards Magdalena told him that she was expecting trouble. It hung in the air at the adobe; it accompanied her to Santa Barbara; it haunted waking hours and dreams. Before Tim spoke ever a word, at the first glance into his drawn and stricken face, she wailed out:

"Ay de mi! My father is dead—dead!"

Tim answered hoarsely:

"Yes."

"Bannon kill him! I know—I know."

Tim took her small hand, holding it firmly:

"Magdalena, your father killed Bannon; and now he is dead."

At the moment he could say no more. Magdalena rushed into the house, wailing. Tim attended to his horse, which was nearly spent. There were other Spanish women in the house. Tim heard them wailing with Magdalena, a long wild note of anguish.

Magdalena's host, a kinsman of Don Clodomiro, came out to greet Tim. When he heard the facts, he opened his hands, held them for an instant palm upwards, and

then turned them palm downwards. The gesture was an epitaph on the old order. Tim said:

"We must bring these hounds to justice."

The Spaniard shook his head mournfully. Tim said passionately:

"They murdered Don Clodomiro, and they nearly murdered me."

"Huy!"

"If there is law in California——!"

"You will see, señor. Nothing will be done, nothing."

And again that deprecating gesture.

They drove to Agua Caliente, to cut down the poor body, and take it back to the adobe. Magdalena remained with the women. Tim never saw her alone till after the funeral.

II

An inquest followed, of course.

Tim was called as a witness. On the faces of coroner and jury he beheld a half-sullen, half-derisive expression. Justice, in their opinion, had been vindicated. Judge Lynch had done his duty. The sacred rights of the poor squatter were proclaimed in vile English with copious expectoration of tobacco-juice!

A juryman said solemnly to Tim:

"Young sir, you're hed a mighty close call. Be more keerful after this."

"I shall pick my company, you may be sure," replied Tim, and the interlocutor lay awake that night for at least half an hour wondering what the derned Britisher meant.

Uncle Sam took no further action. The writer happened to be at the inquest. He prefers to record the facts without comment. Had Tim died, when the greaser slipped a knife into him, the verdict would have been *Justifiable Homicide.*

Don Clodomiro was laid to rest in the Catholic ceme-

tery, and soon forgotten. Tom Bannon was buried, also. One of the squatters observed to the widow on the day of the funeral:

"Cheer up, Marm. We give Tom a fine send-off!"

III

Magdalena and Tim met alone in the sitting-room of the adobe. It contained some fine pieces of mahogany brought round the Horn in early days, and paid for with hides and tallow, or with slugs of gold which lay in a basket in the tapanco, or garret. Don Clodomiro, as a young man, would remove a tile from the roof, and drop a lump of tallow at the end of a cord into the basket, and so secure extra pocket-money. His father winked at such petty larceny. Had he not done the same in his youth?

Magdalena looked pitifully small and forlorn in her black garments, but she assumed a certain dignity as became her father's daughter. Tim sat beside her upon a horse-hair sofa.

"What are you going to do, Magdalena?"

"Teem, I do not know."

"You have this ranch and a little money in the bank—not much."

"You will stay with me, Teem?"

"You want to stay on here?"

She caught a note of protest, of surprise in his voice.

"It is my home, Teem. I cannot go to my cousins, because they are poor. Shall I sell Agua Caliente, no?"

"Not yet, dear."

He spoke of the bituminous rock, of the oil, of the hot sulphur spring. She listened attentively, nodding her head. She might be ignorant of many things, but here was no empty-pated girl. A woman looked into Tim's blue eyes.

"You no want to stay, Teem?"

"I want to do what is best for you."

Her eyes brightened; a few sunny flecks danced in them, as she sighed:

"You are a good, kind Teem."

He said excitedly:

"I am so sorry for you, Magdalena. You will never know, dear, how sorry I am!"

"Ohé! I know." She pressed his hand softly.

"I am racking my brains to decide what is best for you. Your poor father asked me to watch out for you: and I promised him that I would."

"Yes; you are a good Teem." She continued quietly, as if she had pondered her words. "I wish you to stay here with me."

"But, Magdalena——"

She just touched his lips with her finger, silencing him.

"You have been happy here, no?"

"Most awfully happy."

"But sometimes, at night, you have thought of your own country, of England,—of some pretty girls, perhaps, who is waiting for you, Teem."

The bitterness in his voice brought a flush to her cheeks, as he replied:

"There is no girl waiting for me, Magdalena."

He fell into a reverie; she watched him, playing with the crêpe upon her gown. Then she said falteringly:

"Teem, at the last, when you take leave of my father—did he send no message to me?"

"He called upon the Virgin to bless you."

Magdalena crossed herself.

"Nothing else?"

Tim whispered bashfully:

"He told me to embrace you—for him."

It sounded oddly in English; he wished that he was talking Spanish. Magdalena turned her cheek:

"I will take his last kiss from you, Teem."

He kissed her solemnly. Her head drooped till it rested upon his shoulder. She began to cry.

"I am so lonely, mi amigo."

Tim's heart thumped against his ribs. She was clinging to him, sobbing unrestrainedly. A tempest of emotion shook him and her. He, too, felt unbearably lonely and forlorn. She wanted him. She was a sweet, good girl, and a lady.

He kissed the tears from her eyes. She allowed him to do so. He kissed her pretty hair, her forehead, and lastly her lips. Then doubt fled. He loved her; and she loved him.

"Magdalena!"

"Teem?"

"Will you be my little wife?"

She answered in Spanish:

"God of my soul! I have loved you from the first. I adore you. I love you with all my heart and spirit and body."

Her passion whirled him to heights—and depths. Magdalena was a pure maiden. Must he tell her his sordid story, blacken the whiteness of her love? He told himself sorrowfully that no other course was open. If she wanted him—and he wanted her—let her take him as he was, or let him go. But he trembled with fear that she might let him go.

IV

He told the tale for the third time, sensible that it lost in the telling, that it exhaled a stale odour, which must offend the nostrils of the girl who listened so attentively, with her great eyes gazing into his. As he recited the crude facts, he could see his image reflected in those liquid pools, a shrunken presentment. He felt abnormally small.

When he had finished, when he stood naked and ashamed before her, she burst again into tears. But they were shed for him, not for herself. She said brokenly:

"Oh! you have suffered—you have suffered. But it is nothing—nothing. I shall make you forget, ohé! My love

will make you forget, Teem. Don't stare at me so, you foolish boy! I am not angry. Ah! Dios! but I could strike Ivy. I hate her, because she hated you. You no understand me! And you have given her a child! And still she hate you! God of my soul! is it possible?"

"You are a wonder," said Tim. He added in a whisper: "And not yet eighteen."

"Eighteen!" She laughed scornfully; her bosom rose and fell. "I have seen girls of fourteen who would understand and weep for you. We are not cold, we Spanish! But she—she must be of ice. To have you, my beautiful Teem, and then to throw you away! Ay! Ay!"

She pressed his head to her bosom with a superbly maternal passion. He could hear the throbbing of her heart, beating for him alone.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed. "How I'll work for you!"

She laughed happily.

"I shall work too, my Teem. We will work together."

Then she frowned; and Tim kissed away the frown.

"What is it, you angel?"

"It will pass, but I am jealous of the boy. Is it wicked of me to grudge her that? Yes; yes. But if she hates him——!"

"No, no, Magdalena. The child is well cared for. He is strong and healthy."

"Ah! Could your child be anything else? Mi querido, this has drawn you closer to me. How right and wise you were to tell me. A man can tell anything, anything to the woman who loves him."

She spoke of herself as a woman; and he had wit enough not to contradict her.

V

They were married.

Tim did not tell the Vicar of his marriage. Remember that he was living in the land of Mañana, with a daughter

of a procrastinating race. Day by day, he postponed the task which involved explanations and exculpations; day by day it became increasingly difficult to write with entire frankness. He had married a Roman Catholic. To please Magdalena he had been received into Holy Mother Church. The Vicar would be terribly pained; and surely another man's child had caused him pain enough. No apologies need be offered for Tim's defection from the Church of England. Before and just after the Gringo came, it used to be a saying in Southern California that the Englishmen and Americans who married the *señoritas* and espoused also their religion left their consciences at Cape Horn. Tim wanted to please a wife who adored him.

Magdalena made him very happy.

One must try to behold them as Daphnis and Chloe in Arcadia. They were too young and too healthy to analyse happiness—that fatal blunder! They accepted it joyously. Sometimes Tim would say to himself: "Whatever happens now, I have had an inning."

He went about his work. As a rule, Magdalena accompanied him. When he ploughed, she would drive the horses; when he chopped wood, she piled it into neat cords. He fed the horses, but she watered them. He helped her in the kitchen, and learned the mysterious processes of Spanish cooking.

He was obliged to tell her many times a day that he loved her. She would laugh and hold up her finger:

"Sure, Teem?"

"Quite sure!"

"Ohé, what a nice Teem you are!"

After supper, she would curl up in a chair, and look at Tim, while he read aloud. Sometimes he would pause and say:

"Do you understand that, Brownie?"

And she would reply:

"No; but I love to hear your voice. Go on, Teem."

Then he would lay down the book or the paper, and try

to make things clear. She had plenty of intelligence, but it was not prudent to lead her far from her own circle. She always frowned a little when he spoke of England. They saw few neighbours, because Magdalena held in horror the squatters, regarding them as murderers; but the invasion continued. Some newcomers, not those who took up claims, were pleasant enough people. They bought land, planted out orchards, and built fairly comfortable houses. Many possessed independent means, and these, as a rule, were seeking health and climate. The fame of the sulphur spring spread abroad. Don Clodomiro had built a small shanty, holding a couple of bath-tubs, made of redwood, stained black by the sulphur. Tim saw possibilities of adding to a small income. He built some cheap bath-houses; and bought many towels, charging a dollar for a *bain complet*. Within six months, to the immense surprise of our Arcadians, they were making a hundred dollars a month, clear, out of the bathing establishment, with a happy prospect of even handsomer dividends.

In Don Clodomiro's time there had been no garden, in the English sense of the word. In the orchard, all vegetables grew like Jack's beanstalk, and over the old adobe clambered a few roses, blooming perpetually. Tim was not satisfied till he had a small lawn enclosed with a cypress fence, and many flowers. Watering the lawn was an easy job, for he bought a couple of sprinklers, which Magdalena kept for ever on the move. Water never failed them.

He noticed that Magdalena never spoke of the future and very rarely of the past. She lived joyously in an enchanting present. One day Tim said casually:

"Your father married after he was thirty."

"Oh, no! He married young. He was twenty; my mother was sixteen."

"And you were the only child."

"I was the youngest. There was," she checked them off upon her fingers, "Ramon, and Luis, and Juan, and Narciso, and poor Dolores."

"Heavens! But where are they?"

"They are dead, Teem."

"Dead?" He stared at her hungrily. "But how? Why?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"The consumption! Ay de mi! So many of our race die of the consumption. It is strange, Teem. The Indians die like that, too, so my father say. And now it is our turn. Perhaps the Gringos will die, too, no?"

"Consumption?"

He kissed her fiercely, straining her small body to his mighty chest. He told himself that she enjoyed superb health, which was true, and henceforward he would watch her jealously, keep her in cotton wool, his blessed little wife.

"Teem, how you squeeze me! How I love to be squeezed by you, mi querido!"

His fear passed, but the shadow of it lay black across the future.

VI

Once a month he wrote to and received a letter from the Vicar. He heard thus of his old friends, and wondered whether they had forgotten him. What fun it would be to crack a long yarn with the dear old Colonel, and to run round the village, chaffing the cottagers! Perhaps he would never see any of them again. At such moments an odd yearning twisted him, not homesickness, something more subtile, a racial feeling, the call of mother-country which most exiles, however happy, must experience.

Two years after Tim's marriage, the Vicar reported the news of Daffy's engagement to the eldest son of a rich peer, a well-known ironmaster, exalted by Gladstone to the Upper House, and now—so the Vicar wrote—a confirmed Tory. "It's a big marriage, but she is a beautiful, clever woman. I hope she will be happy. The young man is in the Guards. Mrs. Carmichael told me that she was

ready to sing her 'Nunc Dimittis,' but I accepted this with reservations."

Tim did not show this letter to Magdalena. He rode, instead, into the back-pasture, tied his horse to a live-oak, and gave himself up to introspection.

Daffy had become an attenuated shade haunting misty corners of his memory. He thought of her tenderly, but he might have shewn such thoughts to Magdalena. Wisely, he did not do so. He tried to behold Daffy as a great lady, a woman of high fashion. She would adorn any station. Her future husband, no doubt, would leave the Army and enter Parliament. Daffy would push him on. Her beauty and cleverness would be incalculable assets.

He might have married Daffy.

No regrets tore him. He had taken the colour of his surroundings. He was brown as any Spaniard, brown as the foothills in summer, brown and hard, physically as near perfection as a man can be. To love and be loved, to work not too strenuously at congenial tasks, to behold the concrete results of such labour, to make much out of little—wasn't this sufficient for any man?

He could not answer the insistent question quite honestly. There were ever-recurring moments when something within him clamoured for greater triumphs than a small ranch could furnish. The Vicar sent him papers, the *Spectator,* then under Hutton's admirable editorship, and *The Illustrated London News.* Now and again he would see the picture or read news of some school-fellow who had achieved distinction. More often than not he could vividly recall the fellow as one whom he had reckoned his intellectual inferior. He was not of a jealous temperament, but pangs assailed him when he tried to measure the triumphs of his contemporaries.

Magdalena wanted children, but none came to them.

He thought of the unknown child to whom he, the father, was unknown. According to the Vicar, the urchin was thriving, a jolly little chap nearly six years old! What

would become of him? Sometimes he wondered whether it might be possible to take the boy from Ivy, if Magdalena bore him no others. Magdalena would mother his child; he was quite sure of that. Ivy, heartless little animal, might be glad to let him go.

Presently, he tore up the Vicar's letter, and watched the summer's breeze play with the bits of paper. One bit was caught by a higher current and whirled out of sight. So it had been with him!

In his leisure hours, he made many pencil drawings, much admired by Magdalena. He abandoned caricature, and tried to reproduce what he saw as faithfully as possible. Continual practice brought about aptitude. Then he began to paint in oil, attempting many portraits of Magdalena, who declared that she loved to pose. A wandering artist from San Francisco saw some of his sketches.

"These are very good," he said. "Where did you learn to draw?"

Tim confessed that he was self-taught. He had always drawn, spoiling reams of paper. The artist nodded.

"That's the only way. It's a pity——"

"A pity?"

"That you can't take this up seriously. You have an extraordinary sense of colour. That is a gift. I shall never have it. You need two years hard work in Paris."

"Anything else?" asked Tim.

The artist remained a month, and was kind enough to overhaul Tim's colour-box, and to give him many hints. When he left the neighbouring village, he said to Tim:

"Stick to your drawing. Draw everything and everybody. I'll send you a text-book or two on perspective and anatomy."

Another year glided by.

California was prospering; the boom in land approached its zenith. One day, Tim opened a letter addressed to the owner of Agua Caliente Rancho; the handwriting seemed familiar. To his immense surprise and pleasure, the let-

ter was written by his old friend, Harvey Cooke, written on business paper and typewritten. Harvey Cooke, apparently, was a real-estate agent in Santa Barbara. He wrote to ask if Agua Caliente was for sale, and, if so, at what price. Obviously, he had not the smallest idea that he was writing to Tim.

In much excitement Tim shewed the letter to Magdalena, who advised him to answer it in person. Let him ride into Santa Barbara, and renew his friendship with Señor Cooke. That would be a fine pasear!

"But you do not want to sell Agua Caliente, no?"

"That's your affair, Brownie. If we were offered a thumping price, what?"

He looked at her curiously, wondering how she would reply.

"Dios! I should like my Teem to be rich. He is so clever, cleverer than the Gringos. It takes money to make money. Father say that. I suppose we are almost paisanos." She sighed, adding sweetly: "I am ambeetious, Teem, not for myself, but for you. Ohé! I would sell Agua Caliente to make you rich."

VII

Next day, he rode into Santa Barbara, leaving Magdalena behind, although he asked her to accompany him.

"No; you will want to talk and talk with Señor Cooke. I shall prepare a fiesta. Ojalà! You will see!"

Since Don Clodomiro's death, the old Indian woman had remained with them. Magdalena would be quite happy making tamales with her.

Cooke greeted him very cordially, amazed to hear of Tim's marriage, and eager to recite his own adventures. He had bought and managed a small hotel in Santa Cruz, selling it eventually at a handsome profit. Then he had drifted into the real-estate business, the subdivision of

town plots, fire and life insurance, and so forth. He concluded on a jubilant note:

"I am going to make a pile, Tim. It's a dead cert. I've caught on, cut my wisdom teeth."

"So have I," said Tim.

"You look fine. Lord! how green we were in the old days! You must dine with us to-night. The Missus will hug you."

"And the boys?"

"Both doing well, but they've cut loose from me. One in the Railroad—fine service! T'other is specialising in prunes in the Santa Clara Valley."

Tim dined with them. Cooke cracked a bottle of champagne. After dinner the men smoked two big cigars. Cooke said that he would return with Tim and inspect the sulphur spring.

"It's like this," he had become slightly American in his modes of speech, "you may have a bonanza. And bituminous rock indicates oil. You let me nose about a bit."

"Bring Mrs. Cooke. I want her to meet my wife. We can put you up, if you don't mind roughing it."

"Done!"

"Have you any children, Tim?" asked Mrs. Cooke.

"No."

"It *is* funny to think of you as a Benedict."

Tim rode back early to prepare Magdalena. She was delighted at the prospect of entertaining her husband's friends. Nothing she possessed was too good for them. The old Indita and she retired to the kitchen.

The Cookes drove over in a buggy, and stayed for two days. Harvey Cooke's energy fired Tim. The elder man seemed to be vastly impressed by the sulphur spring, although he made a grimace when he tasted the water, but he remarked hopefully:

"The worse it tastes, the better. Cheap medicine!"

Mrs. Cooke talked to Magdalena:

"You have the dearest little place, but isn't Tim rather wasted on a small ranch?"

"Ohé, I know."

"My husband has the highest opinion of him. And you? Wouldn't you be happier in Santa Barbara? Forgive an old woman's frankness, but you are quite charming. Tim is a lucky fellow. Society in Santa Barbara would welcome such a nice pair."

Magdalena said proudly:

"I am of kin to the Estradas, and Bandinis and De la Guerras."

"Your position, then, will be assured."

VIII

This visit brought about immense changes. Cooke's optimism, combined with his natural shrewdness and worldly wisdom, infected Tim and Magdalena. Any suspicion that his old friends had paid a visit to Agua Caliente for "business" purposes vanished utterly, when Cooke took Tim aside and said:

"Look here, my boy, I want you."

"What for?"

"I must have a partner. I see the finger of Providence in this. By George! I do. I want you, Tim, to come in with me right here and now. And between us we'll make the fur fly. I know you, and you know me. It's the chance of a lifetime."

"But I've no capital."

"I don't care. You've a good head on stout shoulders. And you've had an immense and invaluable experience of men. You can handle 'em. My notion is to run my real-estate business as I ran my hotel—on strictly honest lines. Men with land to sell will hunt us, because we shall treat them squarely; men who want to buy land will hunt us for just the same reason. I tell you, it's a cinch."

"And the ranch?"

"Do nothing hastily about that. We must boom the sulphur-spring business. I suggest putting in a manager *pro tem.* We'll find some enterprising cove with coin who'll bore for oil on shares. The income from the spring and what you'll make with me will keep you going nicely in Santa Barbara. And, dash it! you ought to think of your wife. Do you propose to bury that charming creature in these brush hills?"

"This is most awfully good of you."

"As to that, I repeat I want you. I'd sooner have you than either of my own boys. That's a cold fact. You look—somebody, and personality is worth big money in a new country."

Tim began hesitatingly:

"If Magdalena——"

"My dear fellow, you ask her. She won't hang back. She has fine blood in her; so have you; are you going to chuck all ambitions and sink into a clod?"

"Damn it, no!"

Magdalena and he slept little that night. Before morning the matter was settled more or less upon the lines indicated by Cooke. Within a week a deed of partnership had been drawn up by a local attorney, and the signing of it furnished an occasion for more champagne. By this time both Tim and Magdalena were quite intoxicated by the possibilities panoramically displayed by Cooke. He prattled of private cars, steam yachts, and other toys.

Why not?

Nevertheless, the actual signing of the deed of partnership introduced a complication. Cooke knew Tim's name to be White, although, boylike, he had chosen to leave England under the name of Green. Cooke objected to Green.

"Your salad days are over, Tim."

"I hope so."

"Some of these big land-owners might not care to entrust their interests to a Britisher called Green."

"Good! I'll chuck Green."
"And revert to White?"
"No."
"But why not?"
"I have reasons. Do I look white?"
"You look brown."
That will do nicely. Cooke and Brown. Tim Brown."
"It's a good, simple English name," said Cooke.
"*Floreat* Brown!" cried Tim.

BOOK THREE: BROWN

BOOK THREE: BROWN

CHAPTER I

SANTA BARBARA

I

IT is easy to make money in boom times, because it flows to Man in a percolating, ever-widening stream. When the slump follows, arid channels remain, and Man wonders where the precious fluid has gone. Moreover, to those who have not witnessed a big boom, the most restrained account must appear gross exaggeration. At the height of the land excitement in Southern California, greedy buyers stood in line outside the real-estate offices waiting their turn to gobble up town-lots which they had never seen. To beguile the lagging hours they read pamphlets and studied maps upon which were laid out cities nearly as large as San Francisco.

Tim plunged into this vortex of excitement. Cooke and he were busy from morning till night, and far into the night. You might have ransacked the Golden State to find a team better equipped to pull together. Tim supplied youth and enthusiasm: Cooke furnished wisdom and tact. Cooke sat in the office, accessible to all-comers, invariably cheery, suave, and counselling moderation. Tim did the "outside" work, driving clients to ranches near and far, entertaining them en route with a knowledge of the country and its resources gleaned at first hand. The al fresco luncheons of the firm became famous. Tim could barbecue beef on willow spits and serve it piping hot to

hungry pilgrims. He slaked their thirst with lager beer. He provided the best cigars. The grimmest face relaxed when Tim told his stories, personal experiences racy of the soil. Dust and heat never conquered his high spirits: rain failed to dampen them.

Cooke said: "Give 'em a hog-killing time. Leave business to me. Yours is the harder job, my boy. You must play the pioneer, open up their hearts. I'll step in afterwards, and do the rest. Never answer any question unless you are sure of the right reply. Refer what you don't know to me. Avoid exaggeration. Our competitors are mostly liars, and they will be found out."

At first the firm worked on commission, gleaning small but certain profits. Then a big opportunity presented itself. A tract of land just outside Santa Barbara was offered to Cooke and Brown at what seemed a large price even for boom times. But Cooke contended that the demand for suburban lots had hardly begun, and predicted that supply would not keep pace with demand when it did come. He so impressed James Mackinnon, the president of a local bank, with his views that the firm borrowed a sum of money sufficient to make a first payment. Mackinnon was reckoned to be a "hard nut," possessing an extraordinary knowledge of character, gleaned during forty years' strenuous business life, and the ability to use brains other than his own, an essential faculty of business men. In Cooke he recognised the pioneer, for Cooke's methods (since adopted by rivals and successors) were at that time original. The firm's scheme was this: the other payments due to the owner of the suburban tract were secured by a first mortgage on the undivided property. Mackinnon, therefore, had no security except the promissory note of Cooke and Brown, plus the conviction that the firm's "proposition" was sound. Cooke promised that all moneys from sales should be paid in full into the bank. A certain percentage of every dollar so paid was credited on the

firm's note of hand: the rest remained as a sinking fund wherewith to meet the further payments due to the owner of the tract.

To-day no bank would do business upon such lines. Within a week the tract was surveyed and subdivided. Cooke sold the lots upon terms approved by Mackinnon, taking a one-third cash payment, and a note secured by mortgage for the balance. The bank discounted the notes. Actual facts are given, because the hypercritical might question the result.

Within three months Cooke and Brown had sold every lot, and cleared up the deal. The firm netted sixty thousand dollars: everybody was satisfied: and the bank, through its President, hinted discreetly that it was prepared to finance another similar enterprise.

Tim had a quarter share in all profits.

II

Magdalena and he were living in a pretty cottage not far from the Arlington Hotel, the Mecca in those days (and no doubt still) of rich health-seekers. But after the big deal, Tim suggested to his wife the expediency of living in the hotel, more completely in touch with the health-seekers and idle rich. Magdalena made no objections.

Tim said: "It won't be so dull for you, Brownie."

"I have never been dull, Teem."

At this time he wrote to the Vicar, telling him everything: his marriage, his unexpected prosperity, his intention of bringing his wife to Little Pennington. He enclosed a photograph. The Vicar wrote in reply:

"I am rejoiced. Your little wife looks charming. I am sure that I shall love her dearly for her own sake. Come to me as reasonably soon as possible. I am not growing younger, my dear boy, and I have so much to say to you."

Of course the junior partner could not be spared.

The first fruits of the move to the Arlington were laid at Magdalena's tiny feet. A syndicate bought Agua Caliente for fifty thousand dollars. Tim and Magdalena jumped hot-foot to accept such a splendid offer, but Cooke remained calm. The syndicate proposed to build an immense hotel, lay out a small town, pave the streets with bituminous rock, and probably bore for oil.

"Stick out for a one-tenth interest," he advised. Finally this was accorded also. Tim brought the money in one certified cheque to Magdalena. She said smilingly:

"It is yours, Teem."

"You sweet thing! Do you think I would touch your money?"

He spoke eloquently upon the expediency of having a nest egg. Magdalena became almost cross.

"Teem, you must do what you please."

"I shall invest it in gilt-edged stuff, city bonds or something sound. Cooke will know."

"Ohé! Señor Cooke will know."

This had become a mild family joke. Cooke, in those days, did seem to be omniscient, but Magdalena smiled with faint derision when she repeated the familiar phrase.

It never occurred to Tim that Cooke did not quite know all that was passing in a fond woman's heart, a woman constrained by circumstance to stand idle, looking on smilingly at the feverish activities of her Anglo-Saxon husband.

The money was not invested in city bonds. Cooke took Tim aside—out of the crowded office—when his advice was asked. He spoke tentatively:

"You have this fifty and almost another twenty of your own, eh?"

"As near as no matter."

"Call it an even seventy thousand dollars. If I put up the same amount of money, and give you an undivided half interest instead of a quarter, we should control a tremendous working capital."

Tim nodded, taking the words literally.

"Yes, just one hundred and forty thousand dollars."

Cooke laughed jovially:

"My dear Tim, you are rather dense. I purposely used the word 'control.' Our working capital would be something over a million."

Tim gasped, accustomed as he had grown to big figures.

Cooke said slowly:

"You ignore our credit."

"Yours, you mean."

"The credit of the firm with the banks. With this joint capital in hard cash, we *can* control a cool million."

"By Jove! it makes me warm to think of it."

"Well, think it well over. I leave it to you and Magdalena."

Magdalena was told. Tim told her everything: emptied his mind each night for her inspection, a process known as delivering the budget. He believed, poor fellow, that she was deeply interested in his schemes, whereas, in truth, she was interested only in having his confidence.

"Teem, you must do what the Señor Cooke says."

"But it's your money, Brownie, and I hate fooling about with it."

"You want to be ver' rich, no?"

"You bet!"

"Then follow the advice of Señor Cooke. He knows."

Next week a new deed of partnership was signed.

III

At this time the Santa Barbara Investment and Development Company was organized by Cooke, and Tim became Honorary Secretary. Most of the well-known business men in the town subscribed so much a month to this advertising scheme, for it was nothing else. The sole object being to publish printed matter about Santa Barbara, and

scatter the same broadcast over the wide earth. Cooke wrote articles which were inserted in the leading newspapers. Cooke spoke of these as ground-bait. The money so collected and spent brought fish to the net, but the time came when such expenditure was deemed by the Board no longer necessary. And then occurred an incident which must be recorded, because it brought unlooked-for prestige to Tim, as Honorary Secretary. One of the monthly subscribers happened to be a rich storekeeper, absent in Europe when the Company was doing its best work. He returned to Santa Barbara about the time when the I. and D. was wound up. Of all subscribers, this man, Flynt, alone stood in arrears to the tune of some two hundred dollars. Tim tried to collect the money, but failed. He reported such failure to the Board. James Mackinnon, President of the Board, shrugged his shoulders. Flynt was a notorious pincher, so it appeared, and Tim was ignorant of this.

Mackinnon said to Tim:

"Why didn't you collect this subscription each month when it became due?"

"I tried to," said Tim. "Flynt's cashier had no authority to pay, and asked me to wait till his chief returned. I thought it would be all right."

"And it isn't," said Mackinnon drily.

Tim flushed, conscious of implied censure. Cooke laughed.

"We must settle the matter amongst ourselves."

"Obviously," replied Mackinnon in the same dry tone.

At this moment inspiration descended upon Tim. He said excitedly:

"Gentlemen, I feel sure that I can screw this sub. out of the old fellow."

"Not you," replied Mackinnon.

Tim said, more quietly:

"I feel sure of it, if the Board will give me a free hand."

Mackinnon said curtly:

"In my opinion we have wasted valuable time over a small matter. It is notorious that this man repudiates such responsibilities. We can't go to law."

"I can get the money," said Tim doggedly.

Mackinnon's grim face relaxed. He liked Tim, and he was not averse to making a small bet when the odds were in his favour.

"A box of cigars you can't!"

"Done!" said Tim. He looked round the table. "Any gentleman here want to bet?"

Three responded to the challenge. Two more boxes of cigars and a dinner to the Board were wagered. Tim took his receipt book, and tore out a page. Cooke was honorary Treasurer. Tim filled in the receipt and asked for Cooke's signature.

"After you've got the cash," said Cooke.

"No, before. That's part of my scheme."

Cooke signed the receipt.

"I shall be back before the Board breaks up," said Tim.

He sped down the street till he came to Flynt's big store. It was past mid-day, and Tim happened to know that at this particular hour Flynt held a small court. He had his hands in a hundred pies, pulling out plums, and amongst his parasites some pressman was sure to be found.

Tim pushed his way into Flynt's office. Yes, the great man was enthroned in his chair, expounding his ideas to the crowd. Tim recognised with joy a reporter of the *Santa Barbara Banner.*

"Good-morning, Mr. Flynt."

"Glad to see ye, young man. Sit down!"

"Can't," said Tim. "I've come on a little matter of business connected with our Investment and Development Company."

Flynt frowned.

"If it's about that two hundred dollars——"

"It is," Tim raised his voice, speaking slowly and distinctly. "The Board is in session, Mr. Flynt; I am empow-

ered by the President to say that we regret having pressed you for the payment of this small amount of two hundred dollars. I am happy to bring you a full receipt for the subscription in arrears, and to add with the Board's compliments that had we known or even suspected that you were financially embarrassed——"

"What, what, what——?"

Flynt jumped up purple with rage. The reporter pricked up his ears: his nostrils twitched as he scented a "scoop."

"Had we known that the meeting of so small an obligation would have inconvenienced you——"

"Inconvenienced me? What the h—ll are you talking about?"

He snatched the receipt from Tim's outstretched hands, glancing at it with congested eyes.

"I call this insolence. You tell old Mackinnon that with my compliments. As if I wanted your dirty money."

He pulled open a drawer, grabbed a cheque-book, and wrote out a cheque.

"Take that back to the Board, and mind you deliver my message."

Tim smiled sweetly:

"I shall not fail to do so. Thank you."

Tim hurried back to the Board, and waved the cheque.

When he explained his methods of drawing blood from a flint, there was rib-shattering laughter.

A first triumph, a score off his own bat! Mackinnon never forgot this little incident. From that moment he treated Tim with distinguished consideration.

IV

What makes for success and popularity in a new country is always interesting, so no apology need be offered for recording another of Tim's triumphs. His energies were not exhausted by business, and soon he told Magdalena

that he must find some form of physical exercise to keep him fit. He bought a punching bag, and punched it diligently. And he boxed with a retired exponent of the manly art, a veteran of fifty fights. This retired champion persuaded Jim Ball, the New Zealand middle-weight, to give an exhibition in Santa Barbara. Jim, let it be said, had just landed in San Francisco and was about to go into training to meet Tarkey, the famous slugger. The men of Santa Barbara assembled to see Ball spar, but, at the last moment, Ball's manager had to announce regretfully that Jim's sparring partner was indisposed, having eaten, so it was whispered, too freely of baked clams. The manager hoped that some gentleman present would take his place, and he ventured to name one Mr. Brown.

Loud cheers for Mr. Brown.

Tim jumped up laughing. He was quite ready to do his best. This prompt acceptance of a challenge delighted his fellow townsmen. Tim stripped in a dressing-room, and faced the mighty man, who certainly weighed two stone more than his fighting weight. To the surprised delight of every man in the hall Tim held his own. It will never be known whether Ball was quite sober, but suddenly he attacked Tim savagely, with the obvious intention of knocking him out. Tim defended himself, quite aware of his antagonist's loss of temper, and taking gamely a lot of punishment. But his jaw set, and his blue eyes sparkled. Ball began to blow heavily. Somebody at the back of the Hall yelled out:

"Now's your chance, Tim!"

Tim feinted with his left and landed hard with his right upon the solar plexus. Ball dropped his guard. Tim swung his left and hooked Ball upon the point of the jaw. With the same blow he had stunned Heavy Shoulders long ago. Ball went to the floor and remained there.

It was nothing, a victory over a man physically unfit: but Santa Barbara acclaimed it as a triumph. Tim became the most popular citizen of the town: and it was esteemed

a privilege to buy town lots from him. Cooke said afterwards:

"As an 'ad.' that lucky punch was worth five thousand dollars to the firm."

And the Señor Cooke knew!

V

Meanwhile Magdalena dissembled. Tim marked no change in her, but a wiser than he might have been uneasy.

She was left alone for many hours each day with nothing to engross her energies but Spanish needle-work.

She missed her poultry yard, her pots and pans, all the simple occupations which make for the happiness of a daughter of the Latin race. Her beloved Tim was dearer than ever, but he seemed to be striding from her. Upon the ranch he had worked hard: and so had she. In Santa Barbara he worked harder: and she was constrained to look on, a passive eye-witness of energies which seemed to exalt him to heights leaving her in the depths, for prosperity frightened her.

She spent some happy hours with her kinswomen, helping them in their household tasks, and she took a wholesome joy in putting on the pretty gowns which Tim made her buy and wear. Often she would walk to the picturesque Mission, and enter the cool, grey Church wherein she had been married and baptised. On her knees she would pray that Tim might not wander too far from her, that she might have once more a home of her own—and a child. She knew that Tim wanted a child, although he never said so. But again and again she would mark a question in his eyes which was never put into words.

A new "proposition" was stirring Tim to his centre, a really tremendous affair. One of the vast Spanish grants, still the undivided property of its owner, was offered to

Cooke and Brown for eight hundred thousand dollars. The partners rode together through park-like lands, through rich alluvial valleys, through brush hills, along bubbling creeks, past gushing springs. Experts predicted that artesian wells might be had for the boring. The rancho seemed to be the natural home of the olive and, in sheltered spots above the frost line, the orange and lemon.

After a week of agonising indecision and suspense, for other buyers were in the market, Cooke said to Tim:

"Go and see Mac."

"You must do that, old man."

"No, it's your turn. He likes you and believes in you. Cut along!"

Tim entered the bank parlour in fear and trembling. Mackinnon supposed that the junior partner had come upon a matter of small importance.

"What can I do for you, Tim?"

"I want to borrow six hundred thousand dollars!"

"Ah! I understand. The Santa Margarita, eh?"

"Just so."

"Doesn't it scare you?"

"Not a bit. I've been over every section. As you know, the owner wants cash."

"Wise man."

"Why do you say that, sir? It seems to me that he ought to be satisfied with a fourth in cash, and a note and mortgage for the balance."

"He is thinking of dry years."

"Years? There have never been two really dry years in succession."

"I fear, Tim, that precedent in this case is no guarantee. Mr. Cooke and you mean business?"

"We do. You will have a first mortgage on the property and we'll turn over all proceeds from sales as before."

"Um! Six hundred thousand is too large a sum for us, but I'll see what can be done in San Francisco. You are prepared to pay down two hundred thousand?"

"Yes."

"Call again the day after to-morrow." Tim left the Bank much exhilarated. Contact with customers had added cubits to his mental stature. Most of them were artlessly simple, asking the same questions and receiving cut-and-dried answers. If the answers happened to be unsatisfactory, they blinked and pulled out fat pocket books. They meant to buy: they had joined the great procession: they dared not lag behind. One enthusiast, who proposed to supply the world with honey, took a fancy to a tract of land conspicuous for the absence of bee-food. When Tim mentioned this, his client said grandiloquently:

"Sir, it's my opinion that the very air here is full of saccharine matter."

It may have been so, doing business became very sweet under such auspicious conditions.

After some exasperating delays, including a visit to San Francisco, the great rancho became the property of Cooke and Brown. Tim told Magdalena that a fortune was in sight. The Señor Cooke and he expected to make a million within the year. Magdalena, so he thought, listened to him somewhat perfunctorily: but about a week later she threw her arms round his neck and whispered:

"I have news for you, Teem."

"What is it?"

"You can't guess, no?"

He held her at arm's length, staring into her eyes, noting the happy sparks of sunlight in them, noting, too, the deeper flush upon her brown cheeks.

"You don't mean——?"

She laughed joyously, nodding her head.

"Yes—it is true. Oh, Teem, what do you say?"

"Say? By the sun, and the moon, and all the stars, I'm the happiest man in the universe!"

"And I am the happiest woman."

CHAPTER II

THE CHERUB

I

AFTER this, Tim's life seemed to gain sequence and connexion. It ceased to be fortuitous. He was climbing steadily a mountain, and testing each foothold, never looking down, and, for the moment, not looking up, engrossed with the step just ahead.

The Santa Margarita had been subdivided, and was selling, but shewing the land to intending buyers necessitated organisation and attention to a thousand details. The surveyor had plotted a small town in the centre of the ranch, which lay some twenty miles to the north east of Santa Barbara: and the firm had built a fairly comfortable hotel. Magdalena gripped opportunity.

"Mi querido, you are always on the road now?"

"I have to be."

"No, listen," she spoke very coaxingly, "listen to my plan. What time would be saved if you lived on the Santa Margarita!"

"But, dash it! I couldn't leave you."

"I will live there with you in the old ranch-house. I shall be ever so happy. Teem, it will be another honeymoon for —me."

"It means roughing it," said Tim, "and just now——"

Magdalena, thinking how dense he was in reading her thoughts, cuddled up closer:

"You foolish Teem, that is what I love. I want something to do when you are busy away from me. I shall be ever so happy in a home of my own."

Tim stared at her. She was wearing one of her daintiest frocks, and she looked—what indeed she was—a creature of refinement, sweetly fragrant of lavender and orris-root. Her pretty hands had become white and soft. She seemed created to adorn a charming drawing-room, to play the part of hostess and mistress, issuing her orders and seeing that they were carried out.

He exclaimed sharply:

"I loathe the idea of your messing about a kitchen, and all that."

A gesture implied a casting to the void of manual work.

"But you did not loathe it at Agua Caliente, no?"

"Of course not." For the instant he was cornered, but he went on lucidly enough:

"We had to do it: and we made the best of it. *Grin and bear it* was rubbed into me in the foc'sle of *The Cassandra*. . . . And when I tramped the road too, by George! I take it that we should make the best of things if we were poor again, but we're not poor. We've money to burn. A home of your own! Do you suppose that I'm not thinking of that, and longing for it——! And what sort of a home do I see you in? One of these beastly frame houses with a couple of cheeky servants? Not much! My thoughts, Brownie, dwell permanently somewhere in Hampshire, in or near the New Forest. I mean to buy a place that will be a proper setting for you, a dream of a place, a lovely old manor house, in lovely old gardens, where you will reign as queen over a decent establishment."

She kissed him softly.

"Yes, I know you think of that, but——" She sighed and remained silent, gazing at him wistfully.

"But—what?"

"Somehow, my Teem, I do not see myself over there."

"Not likely, considering that you've never been out of Santa Barbara county."

She resumed her coaxing tone.

"Ohé! It will be nice to be queen of your big house, but now, Teem, I want to go to Santa Margarita."

"Because you are an unselfish darling: because you think it would help me."

"Santisima Virgen! I want it for myself. I swear!"

"All right. I'll think it over."

The Señor Cooke furthered Magdalena's schemes, and, possibly, Mrs. Cooke divined something of what was rankling in the little woman's mind. Ultimately Tim and his wife took up their quarters in the Santa Margarita ranch house.

Money poured in.

II

Business was conducted upon simple lines. Tim would show land to intending purchasers, and talk fluently of what had been done elsewhere under similar conditions of soil and climate, adumbrating what could be done upon the Santa Margarita. He had the patter of his calling. His experiences before the mast and tramping the roads were priceless. He knew what the intending settler wanted before the man opened his mouth. He could size him up. Cooke had drawn a form of contract which the most ignorant could understand. Upon signing this buyers would pay down a small sum, sufficient to bind the bargain. Cooke did the rest. As a rule the buyer was impatient for a deed, delivered when a one-third payment was made. A note of hand for the balance, secured by mortgage, together with the one-third payment, was duly deposited with Mackinnon: whereupon the particular lot sold was released from the original first mortgage held as security by the two banks, local and metropolitan, who had made the loan of six hundred thousand dollars. By this time more than half of this immense sum had been paid. Cooke and Brown, in fine, stood on a variegated carpet of their own weaving, and were accorded honorable mention in Bradstreet.

In this selling of land Tim achieved eloquence. He beheld men of all sorts and conditions dominated by his enthusiasm, held spell-bound by his words. It would be futile to record these speeches, which varied infinitely.

Relevant to this narrative was the effect on Tim himself. He became a man permeated with the conviction that he might accomplish greater and more enduring triumphs than those which now engrossed mind and body.

He became, too, impatient, of the limitations and disabilities of others. One day he happened to be strolling down the main street of Santa Barbara, when a Cheap Jack standing on a hand cart was selling, or rather attempting to sell, notions to an indifferent and derisive crowd. Tim listened. Probably the poor fellow was tired or ill. He mumbled on till Tim felt angry with him.

"You don't know how to sell your stuff," he remarked.

The Cheap Jack glared at Tim.

"Don't I? Mebbe you think that you could do it, Mister?"

"I'd get more ginger into my patter than you do. Here! Come off it! I'll have a shot."

To the delight of the crowd, who remembered Tim's victory over Ball, the Cheap Jack was seized by Tim, and deposited upon the ground. Tim leapt upon the hand-cart.

"You're a lot of blooming fools," he shouted, as the crowd cheered lustily. "And half blind, too, and cold-blooded pagans in a Christian land. Can't you see that this poor devil is sick? But his stuff is all hunky, just what you want. Now—come on! Step up and bid! Be lively there! Take aholt!" He snatched up a coffee-pot. "What am I offered for this patent coffee-pot? Brews the most delicious coffee out of beans while the bacon is frizzling. Automatic, everlasting, and just the notion which you, ma'am, have been hunting ever since you led that lucky man, your husband, to the altar. Fifty cents! Thank you, Ma'am. Go the seventy-five—five—five! Thank you, Sir, the men are more generous than the ladies. Hi, you, my

old friend at the back, with a big wad in your pocket which I saw yesterday. Go the dollar! I'm bid one dollar for an article which will pay for itself in a fortnight. One-twenty-five! This *is* a Christian land after all. . . ."

Everybody cheered, chaffing Tim, who chaffed back. When he descended from the cart it was empty.

He liked the Americans, and they liked him. He dressed and spoke like a Son of the Golden West: and there is more joy in California over one Britisher who "catches on" to Western ways and manners than over ninety and nine blameless tourists who carry England with them wherever they go.

Cooke and Brown employed Americans to work for them. There were half a dozen "live" clerks in the office, and two individuals outside, known as "Fatty" and "Skinny."

Fatty was a bean-fed product of the county, a huge, smiling red-faced fellow, full of humour, and a shrewd judge of human nature. Skinny had lately come from the mid-west. He drove one of the firm's many buckboards, and suffered from dyspepsia and melancholia. Tim used the pair as object lessons, illustrating the salubrity of the Southern California climate. Some of his customers came from the ague-stricken interior. To them Tim would say:

"Gentlemen, kindly look at those men. They are known in Santa Barbara as "Before" and "After." The stout pink complexioned champion has lived in this town for forty years. The invalid, who can't be seen when he's standing behind a telegraph post, has just left bleeding Kansas. But he's putting on weight."

Such talk soaped the ways whereon some sulky, obstinate pilgrim would slide to the signing of a contract.

III

It was great fun—while it lasted.

Magdalena's baby was born on the Santa Margarita. Tim wished her to move back to the Arlington, but she refused.

Fortunately, a doctor had bought land not far from the ranch-house: and he proved most faithful in his ministrations. A Spanish woman came as nurse. In the chicken corral thirty tender chickens were penned and fattened in accordance with Spanish custom. Magdalena, like her Mother and Grandmother before her, intended to lie in bed for exactly one calendar month and eat a broiler each day. "Toujours perdrix" is a story that has no moral for the Spanish.

To Tim's immense relief, the confinement was not severe, testing the husband's fortitude more than the wife's. The Doctor heartened him up before the event by saying that women of the Latin race had a comparatively easy time.

"Why?" asked Tim.

"Compensation, perhaps."

The baby was a big fat boy, blue-eyed, like Tim. Magdalena lay in bed perfectly happy. Her cup was full and brimming over. She whispered to Tim:

"Now I am no longer jealous."

"Jealous?"

"Ojalà! How jealous I have been thinking of the other."

"What other?"

Was she delirious?

"Ivy's boy—in England."

Tim grew hot and uncomfortable. He had forgotten the other. But it was his—*his!* And he had never seen it, this waif who had crept into life by a back-alley. He kissed Magdalena, and held her hand which lay soft and limp in his own. He was transported to Lanterton. He tried to envisage Ivy and the urchin brought up as a Jellicoe.

"Fancy being jealous of that poor little stray!"

"It has passed."

"I am ashamed to say, Brownie, that I had forgotten him. Now that I am prospering I ought to do something, if anything can be done."

"Do you want him, Teem?"

He frowned, considering the question, seeking to answer it honestly. At Agua Caliente, when he had taken for granted that Magdalena would bear him no sons, he had speculated often and long upon the possibility of getting Ivy's child. But he had dismissed the idea as impracticable.

Did he want the—other?

No. His ripening intelligence co-ordinated swiftly the many complications. Tongues would wag maliciously. He said with decision:

"I do *not* want him."

"Sure, Teem?"

"Ab—solutely."

Magdalena, however, perceived with bitter-sweet emotion that Tim wanted her child. He hung over it as it lay asleep in its basinette: he helped to bathe it; he talked to it absurdly, when he might have been talking to her.

She asked herself if she were jealous of her own baby, dismissing the idea as ridiculous. Suppose this fat boy came between her and her husband? She was too sensible to encourage such alarms and excursions into the future, but they flitted into her mind like bats, nasty hybrid creatures which must be driven out of all well-ordered rooms.

Within a week, an appalling thing happened. The nurse was summoned away to the bed of a dying mother. It was impossible to replace her. Tim took charge of the baby. Not during the day, for neighbours were kind, but at night. And the little wretch slept peacefully most of the day, and remained wide awake and very cross most of the night. The Doctor, much to Magdalena's rage, said that the child must be weaned. Tim bought a book, entitled—"How to feed our Baby," and pored over it: he had to prepare the artificial food at night: he dared—reckless man!—to experiment. The experiments disagreed with the Cherub, for so Tim had named him. He howled horribly, twisting up his tiny legs when colic seized him. He began to lose his nice rolls of fat: a faint blue tinge crept about his eyes and mouth. Tim

was in despair. Laborious days and sleepless nights affected even his iron constitution.

Finally, Mrs. Cooke arrived and dealt drastically with the abominable situation.

"There is nothing wrong but this. The food is far too rich. A tablespoonful of cream in each bottle! Good Heavens! We'll dilute the present mixture with an equal amount of lime-water."

Within two days the Cherub was restored to high health: and Tim slept as peacefully as his son.

But it had been an experience emphasising the tremendous appeal of weakness to strength. Tim loved the baby the more, because for ten awful nights he had exhausted himself in tending it. And again, through his experiments, he had nearly killed the atom. That reflection was humiliating. Certainly, he had a lot to learn about babies.

IV

When the Cherub was five months old, his father and mother returned to Santa Barbara. The big rancho was practically sold out, and a settlement followed with the banks.

Cooke and Brown found themselves with a huge sheaf of Bills Receivable, the promissory notes, secured by mortgage. When these were paid in full there would be, as Cooke had foreseen, nearly a million dollars to divide. Meanwhile the firm was short of cash although rich in what is termed collateral security. The ordinary commission business went on as usual, but competitors had secured much of that, because Cooke refused business unless he was able to give it personal attention. Tim and he were planning a bigger campaign.

At Magdalena's entreaty, Tim rented a house standing in a pretty garden. Two Chinamen were engaged. Tim wished to entertain, and Magdalena raised no objections.

Many distinguished travellers sat at the round table in the pretty dining-room, admiring Magdalena but talking to Tim.

He was now five and twenty, and able—so he put it—to whip his weight, some twelve stone, in wild cats. Magdalena had become slightly matronly.

That winter placed Southern California upon what is known in revivalist circles as "the anxious seat." Light rains fell in November, and a few showers in December, but January ushered in a terrible series of cloudless days.

Rain was prayed for in the churches, but it did not come. A rain-maker arrived from Texas, and burnt much powder. The clouds gathered and passed on withholding the precious moisture. The miseries of a dry year became inscribed upon the faces of the people. All were affected by the drought—except the rich health-seekers, who rejoiced too exuberantly in the soft sunshine. Cooke, however, remained invincibly optimistic.

"This," said he to his partner, "is our Heaven-sent chance. There is a slump in prices. People are scared."

"Don't blame 'em," growled Tim.

"Buy on the slumps," quoted Cooke. "We must get hold of every acre we can."

There were three vast tracts of land to the south of Santa Barbara upon which the firm held an option. But a high price was demanded.

"The price *is* steep," admitted Cooke.

"So is some of the land," said Tim.

More, the tracts in question lay in a zone much drier than that of the Santa Margarita, but nearer to the railroad. Cooke observed thoughtfully:

"A definite offer, say twenty per cent. less than what is asked would be accepted."

"Yes," said Tim.

It was, in fine, an immense speculation, sufficient to give pause to the most daring. Adequate rains meant a steady

rise in land values: drought spelt disaster. Tim and Cooke talked till their tongues ached. Then Tim said curtly:

"Damn it all, let's pitch up half a dollar. If the eagle bird is on top, we'll sail in."

"Right!"

Tim produced the coin and spun it, letting it fall to the ground. It struck on its edge and rolled beneath an immense desk.

"More suspense," said Tim.

The desk was moved: and the eagle bird met two pairs of excited eyes. It seemed to be flapping its wings.

"Bueno!" said Tim.

"I believe in prayer," murmured Cooke, "but these slackers don't pray hard enough."

The offer of the firm was accepted: and gangs of surveyors and chainmen went to work.

And then the rain poured down copiously: and the foothills became translucently green and ablaze with wild flowers. A great syndicate, operating in San Francisco, despatched a silver-tongued representative to Santa Barbara. He wasted no words at first—

"What will you gentlemen take for your bargain?"

"It is a bargain," said Cooke.

"We do not dispute that. The rain fell in the nick of time. I admit that we were suffering up north from cold feet. I am empowered to offer you a very substantial advance on the price paid by you."

"What?"

"Twenty per cent."

"We must think that over," said Cooke.

Their visitor withdrew.

"Well?" said Cooke. "Cash talks, Tim, and we haven't too much of it."

"I have that half dollar. I'm keeping it as a relic."

"Spin it! If the eagle bird turns up again we'll take the cash, and a holiday, too. England, my boy, for both of us."

But the eagle bird did not turn up. The silver-tongued orator exhausted a copious vocabulary. Cooke and Brown refused to deal.

V

One day a tall, well set-up Englishman dressed in grey flannels strolled into the office. The office boy grappled with a name not too clearly articulated, and said to Tim:

"There's an English lord enquiring for you."

"An English lord," repeated Tim, "what lord?"

"I missed his name."

"Shew him in."

The tall Englishman sauntered in, gazing about with that air of condescending detachment so exasperating to Americans. He sat down and began to fill a briar pipe. Tim took a dislike to the man before he had spoken a word, recognising and resenting his easy, patronising manner. Tim said quickly:

"I am sorry, but the boy missed your name."

"I am Lord Rokeby."

Tim looked puzzled. The name seemed extraordinarily familiar. Then he remembered that Daffy had married Lord Rokeby's son. But here was a young man not much older than himself, perhaps thirty. Could it be possible that this was Daffy's husband? His visitor continued in rather a bored voice:

"We—my wife and I—are at the Arlington. I heard that you were an Englishman. And so—I—er—dropped in."

"I am glad to see you," said Tim, but he wasn't. Yes, this was Daffy's husband. Why did she marry him? What a commonplace type! And she, Daffy, was with him, not a quarter of a mile away. The blood rushed into his face. Rokeby, who was leisurely filling his pipe, continued:

"Rather disappointed in Santa Barbara. Disappointed in California generally. Transition period, what? People very aggressive. Furious if you don't crack 'em up."

"I like them," said Tim crisply.

"They tell me you've been successful, made a pot, and all that."

"I have been lucky," Tim admitted modestly.

Rokeby surveyed him with an approbation which he might have shewn to a likely hunter, or a promising retriever. Evidently a dog and horse fellow, this husband of Daffy's. He said curtly:

"You look a bit of a thruster."

"Thanks."

"I might invest a few hundreds here if I saw a profit in sight. Can you shew me any town property?"

"Certainly."

"When?"

"Now if you like."

Again his leisurely lordship favoured Tim with an approving nod.

"Right! Come on."

Outside the office Tim pulled himself together. He must be careful not to shew his dislike to Daffy's husband. As a member of the firm it behooved him to treat possible buyers with courtesy. Also, he desired to meet Daffy. His pulses throbbed at thought of her. Had she changed abominably, become a mannequin, a society puppet? Would she recognise him? And if she didn't, should he reveal himself?

"I'll drive you round the town," said Tim.

The horse in the light buggy pleased Rokeby, and he said so when that gallant trotter struck a three minute gait upon a level stretch of road. He asked the question pat to any Englishman's lips when he meets a fellow-countryman. How long had Tim been in California? Was there any trout fishing handy? Any bears abroad in the hills? Tim, answering these adequately, aroused further interest, culminating in the inevitable:

"Are you a public school man?"

"Yes."

"Which?"

"Eton."

"You don't say so. Same here. What house?"

"I was a Tug."

Rokeby nodded. Since leaving Eton he had amended a youthful dislike of Tugs. He became quite friendly and lost his condescending manner, ending up effusively:

"I say, can't you dine with us? I'd like you to meet Lady Rokeby. She takes what she's pleased to call an intelligent interest in local conditions. If you don't mind being bored stiff by questions about these damned Missions and olive oil and Yankee politics, join us to-night."

"With pleasure."

Soon afterwards the talk drifted into business channels: and it was forced upon Tim's attention that this ex-Guardsman was the son of a famous ironmaster. Rokeby, evidently, had inherited some of his sire's executive ability. His manner became offensive again after he had inspected some "eligible" town property.

"The boom is over," he said sharply. "These prices will come down with a tumble. They go stark mad over here. Lord! what a slump there'll be presently. And it's a damned ticklish climate. And the settlers know nothing about farming. They starve the soil with repeated wheat and barley crops. You take my tip: it's a good 'un: and you seem a good chap. You've made a pot. Pick it up quick, and go home. There's no place like England, and never will be."

"I can't go home yet," said Tim.

He was impressed but unwilling to admit it. Cooke and he were agreed upon the expediency of getting out on the top of the boom. To wait for the slump which must follow would be idiotic. The wisest men in the state, the big bankers, the publicists, the men of science, predicted seven fat years of ever increasing prosperity.

Rokeby went on abusing American methods, while Tim interpolated a "yes" or "no" when such monosyllables became necessary. He was thinking of Daffy. Ought he to startle her—as he might? It would be awkward indeed

if she cut him, refused to sit at meat with him. Finally he dismissed such speculation as childish. She was now a woman of the world, able to confront any emergency with a cool smile.

Rokeby and he returned to the office.

"Half-past seven," said Rokeby. "We're at the Arlington. I'll promise you a decent cigar, not one of those beastly green weeds."

Tim watched him striding towards the hotel.

Daffy's—husband!

VI

He had to tell Magdalena that he was dining out. She expressed no surprise, assuming the dinner to be a matter of business. Some capital deals had been consummated in the Arlington dining-room. Then he added that he was expecting to meet an old friend, Lord Rokeby's wife. Magdalena's suspicions, or shall we say instincts, were quickened not by his words but by his voice, which had an inflection of tenderness when he pronounced Daffy's name. She had never heard of Daffy, but she swooped straight to the conviction that Tim must have liked her long ago. In her soft beguiling tones she asked:

"She was a great friend, no?"

"Daffy Carmichael was a little girl of sixteen, with her hair in a pigtail. We were pals. I pulled her out of a pond once. She may be cold as Greenland's icy mountains, for she heard all about the storm which blew me out of Little Pennington."

"Ohé! Was she very pretty?"

"Yes. And now a haughty beauty."

"She won't be haughty with you, Teem."

"It's like this, I've half a mind to hide under the name of Brown. She simply can't recognise me."

"She will, if she liked you. Oh, yes."

"I'll bet you she doesn't."

"I'll bet with you, Teem."

"Six pairs of white silk stockings against a pair of waders. Mine are worn out."

"Bueno!"

"By George! If she doesn't know me, I'll say nothing. I'd hate to have any gossip started here."

"Dios! she would not start gossip."

"Why not?"

"Because she liked you, I know. You will see."

Tim arrived punctually, and was shewn into the hotel drawing-room. Several people were present, but he recognised Daffy instantly. She stood by herself, for Rokeby was not in the room. He beheld a tall, slender woman in green, a soft pale sea-green which suited admirably her fair hair and delicately tinted skin. Her eyes he would have recognised anywhere, because of the fearless look, but he noted a change. The candid, direct glance had become more pervasive, as if it swept wider horizons. It was almost panoramic. He divined instantly that this once dear creature, so familiar and so strange, searched for what was big in life, ignoring perhaps the little things which count tremendously with most women. He noted, also, in that first, all-embracing, hungry stare, that her face revealed pathos. He knew that she was not happy.

He came forward slowly, having dismissed the servant upon the threshold of the room. He felt reasonably certain that she would fail to recognise his voice, because it had deepened.

As he approached she saw him, and the pupils of her eyes dilated.

"I am Mr. Brown," he said quietly.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed. "You are Tim!"

She held out both her hands, with a radiant smile upon her lips.

CHAPTER III

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW

I

ROKEBY sauntered in some three minutes later, but much can be said by two eager souls in a short space of time. Daffy and Tim met after eight years, met as man and woman, and yet, for the moment, there was no restraint. The old friendship renewed itself spontaneously. Tim became instantly conscious that Daffy understood, that she wanted him to remain her friend. He expected reserves, a certain coldness which might be thawed, or might not. But her gracious welcome re-established intimacy upon the former firm basis. The strength of that intimacy was something above and beyond sexual attraction. Always he had been able to talk to Daffy with entire frankness, to be himself. Even with Magdalena, except perhaps during the months just after their marriage, he was sensible of reserves on both sides. His affairs, the growth of an immense business, for example, with its roots wandering in many directions, inspired no interest or excitement in her beyond the fact that it interested and excited him. When he spoke of other men's achievements her attention wandered. And, often, he had to admit that he did not quite know what Magdalena wished. She dissembled sweetly in her desire to please him. He was well aware by this time that she had detested the life at the Arlington: and it vexed him terribly that she had undergone months of distress quite unnecessarily.

Let us hasten to add that an increasing knowledge of essential difference between a dear little wife and himself

had not undermined love. He counted himself, as well he might, to be one of the luckiest of men, and, temperamentally he fixed his eyes upon the bright side of things.

With Magdalena, too, especially of late, he had, almost unconsciously, striven to appear slightly other than he was, straining upwards towards her idealised conception of him. She believed him to be the strongest and cleverest of men. Insensibly, a certain pose was forced upon him.

To pose before Daffy would be ridiculous.

Daffy said at once:

"You got my letter?"

"Months after it was written."

"Yes, yes: when Mother told me why you had left Little Pennington I knew that you would not answer it."

"I couldn't. It was too late."

"My poor Tim, what an experience for both of us! I suffered horribly, and so, of course, did you."

"Yes, it has passed. I suppose you loathed me."

She smiled faintly, and the smile was maternal. He wondered whether she had children.

"If you think that, Tim, you never really knew me."

"I am married," said Tim. "I must bring my wife to see you. She is a dear and a sweet. I began badly, Daffy, the luck was against me: but Fortune has been kind."

"Here is Rokeby," said Daffy.

Rokeby slowly approached. He was in evening dress, which became him better than loose grey flannel. He had assumed again his air of aloofness. An American woman, standing not far from Tim, said to her companion:

"Say—he's IT, isn't he?"

Tim caught the whisper, and had to stifle a laugh. Indisputably Rokeby was IT, exasperatingly—IT! The fact that his assumption of superiority was quite unconscious, absolutely free from any taint of pose, and also ludicrously independent of mental or moral or physical supremacy tickled Tim's humour. It was funny to reflect that there were thousands of Rokebys sauntering about the world,

imposing their mediocre personalities upon others whom they were pleased to designate as foreigners: condescendingly bland, and impassive, and self-confident.

"Hullo, Brown!"

Daffy's eyebrows went up. Brown? She was expecting a Mr. Brown to dine with Rokeby and herself. Tim had announced himself as Mr. Brown. But she had held out both hands to—Tim.

"Ought to have been down. Sorry!"

Tim explained matters fluently:

"Lady Rokeby and I are old friends. She knew me long ago as Tim White. I ran away to sea. I was very green in those days. I took the name of Green. When the greenness was burnt out of me I selected Brown. This is between ourselves."

Rokeby nodded imperturbably. This fellow was an original, parti-coloured dog. Worth a dinner, anyhow.

"Come on into the dining-room."

The dinner was very pleasant. Rokeby ceased to be superior when talking with an old Etonian. He exhibited no surprise when his wife said incisively:

"You mustn't call me Lady Rokeby, my dear Mr. Brown, I shall be Daffy to you, I hope, and you will be Tim to me to the end of the chapter."

Tim laughed gaily.

When he reached home Magdalena was waiting for him with the familiar smile which always greeted him.

"I've had a very jolly evening," said Tim.

"And I have won my bet, Teem, no?"

"You have, you little witch. Lady Rokeby recognised me at once."

"Ohé—I knew that."

II

The Rokebys spent a week in Santa Barbara. Tim and Magdalena passed many hours with them. Rokeby, it ap-

peared, had come into his kingdom shortly after marriage. He had left the Army and was giving more or less attention to his late father's business. There were no children. After a long afternoon upon the beach, during the course of which Rokeby paid rather marked attention to Tim's wife, Magdalena said with a wise smile:

"Lady Rokeby did not marry for love."

Tim betrayed a slight resentment, as he answered quickly:

"Daffy is incapable of selling herself."

"Dios! I do not say that. But we poor women——"

She paused, pursing up her lips, seeking the right phrase in a foreign tongue. Tim and she had ceased to talk Spanish when alone.

"Well?"

"We are so different from you big, strong men. We marry for many reasons which seem good to us. If it is for love alone—bueno! That is the best reason. If it is not for love, we think, perhaps, that love will come. We are so curious, too, my Teem. We lie awake and wonder what it is like to be married. And if we cannot love, we love to be loved. Ay! Ay! And often it is so dull at home. My poor cousins say that. They would marry to escape from Tia Maria Luisa if any nice man ask them. You call that selling yourself?"

"No: I don't, but——"

"Some of us want babies, Teem. I think Lady Rokeby is like that. When she was alone with me, and I shew her Baby, she kneel down by the cot and cuddle him. And then she cry a little. Mebbe she was fond of Baby because she likes you so much: mebbe she wants one of her own. I do not know."

"Of course she wants a son. So does Rokeby. So does every man worth his salt."

"Ay di mi! I am sorry for them both. She is bored with him: and he is bored with her. It is sad."

"It is," said Tim shortly.

Was he annoyed because Magdalena had guessed the

truth? Not a complaint leaked from Daffy's lips. Alone with Tim, she talked with surprising sympathy of his life, not her own. She entered with zest and intelligence into his schemes, pored over maps and pamphlets, criticised his methods, rejoiced over triumphs, and predicted more to come. And yet, great and swift as his success had been, she seemed not quite satisfied with it. Her manner and expression betrayed her.

He perceived that she was leading him on, an old trick! She wanted to escape from California upon the wings of his imagination.

"And afterwards?"

He sketched for her, as he had sketched for his wife, a home in England, a sanctuary in Arcadia. Daffy laughed, shaking her head.

"She is charming, your wife, but a solitude à deux!"

"We were quite alone on the ranch, and as happy as larks."

"But, then, you had not tasted blood. Frankly, does this big business suffice? Do you want to go on and on till you own and subdivide the earth?"

"We shall get out, of course, before the slump comes."

"If you can."

"If we can. And then Cooke and Brown will make a bee line for England."

"I follow you. Hunting, shooting, fishing, mild politics, a seat on the bench—what else?"

"Old Daff, you worm things out of a fellow."

"There is something: I knew it."

"I have an ambition: I think I have always had it. It's bedrock, cropping out continually. I had it as a kiddy, as a boy, as a tramp. It is stronger than ever now because it is buried beneath all this land: but it's there, Daffy, and it will crop out again."

"You want to write."

"Write? Perhaps I could write. But I should have to set down life as it is, the beastly parts. And I hate all that.

Zola, for instance, makes me sick. Daffy, I want to paint."

"To—paint!" she repeated softly.

"Don't laugh. Colour appeals to me tremendously. I have never spoken of it, not even to Magdalena. She knows that I am always drawing: and I painted a lot on the ranch, but to her it is a pastime. There are a few fine pictures in private houses here. They say nothing to her, but to me . . ."

She regarded him curiously, for he was revealing a new Tim.

"Try to tell me how you feel . . ."

"It is a sort of religion." He went on, with less restraint. "What is religion, Daffy? We had rather a dose of what they call religion in Little Pennington. Cut and dried, eh? Cut and come again describes it better. It was the real, right thing for most of 'em. I've come to see that. The mistake they made,—at least so it seems to me . . . was their inability to realise that religion should not be standardised. You can't impose the same formulas upon everybody, regardless of immense differences. What nourished dear Mary Nightingale disagreed violently with me. But it would be impossible to make her see that."

"Tim: I have been through this."

"As if I didn't know! There's Magdalena. She's a dyed-in-the-wool Roman, accepts everything, questions nothing. I wouldn't shake her faith in doctrine and dogma for a clear deed to this State. I'll tell you another secret. Lord! how this does bring back our heart-to-heart talks in the old Dell. I joined the Roman Church because I was terrified of upsetting Magdalena's artless faith. I haven't had the pluck to tell the Vicar. Magdalena would stew herself into a fever if she thought of me as a heretic. And to me the Roman Church is no better and no worse than the English Church. Each is cocksure of itself. The Nonconformists are nearly as bad. There are plenty of Calvins still alive. Religion ought to be something bigger than cramming dogmas down unwilling throats. Well, there it is."

Daffy said quietly:

"But this religion of yours?"

"I am clearing the way, burning the brush. I left doctrine and dogma behind in Little Pennington. The Pennington code was behind my misdoings. I didn't know it then. It's coming to me clearly now. I've talked with Cooke. He's taught me a lot. I was pitchforked into Eton without a word of warning. When I slipped out of College for a lark I didn't know what interpretation might be placed upon such an adventure. If I had known, I should not have been expelled. Now we come to the unspeakable offence. I swear to you that Ivy Jellicoe and I never considered consequences until it was too late. The unstained code again. I'm not a fool. Had I been taught a little physiology, I should be in India instead of here. Thank the Lord I am here! Then I found myself in the fo'csle of a sailing ship, and I began to get my bearings. I came aboard compassless, wild with rage and misery. Sun, and wind, and work blew all that bang out of me. And ever since, bit by bit, day by day, I've been reconstructing some order out of my little chaos. I haven't found what I want yet, but I'm hunting hard."

"Poor old Tim!"

"Don't pity me, Daffy, I am glad that I've been through all this. I feel, by George, as some of our old timers feel, when they listen to the tourists that cross the Rockies in a Pullman sleeper. California can never be to the tourist what it is to the pioneer. Well—we get at last to my painting. I had to have some sort of religion. I went aloft and looked at the sky and sea. I tramped the roads half-starving and broken in health, and I looked at the eternal hills. And something—something came to me. How am I to describe it? Shall I call it a sense of beauty? Or a conviction that all ugliness passes away. I have seen great forests swept by fire. The beauty blotted out, nothing but blackened stumps of trees, and smouldering ashes. And then, a year or two afterwards, a miracle! A resurrection!

Or a heavenly calm after a terrifying storm. Daffy, dear, these experiences made me see the colour of life, its infinite shades and gradations of tint. I think of myself sometimes as a chameleon. I've tried to adapt myself to my surroundings, to absorb the colour in them. I could never be white again, or green. I am passing now through the brown phase. There will be others. And this colour which I have absorbed must come out, find expression, but not in words: they are such feeble things. I realised that when I tried to explain to Magdalena what I felt about a great picture. But if I could paint——"

"Tim, will you show me some of your drawings and paintings?"

He groaned: "They're awful!"

"Let me see them, please!"

"All right. I seem to have jawed a lot."

"It interested me enormously. I think as you do about the Little Pennington code. It did not adapt itself to individuals, only to certain types. There was no elasticity, no—resiliency. I—I have been rolled in the dust, too."

"Tell me, Daffy."

"I can't. Some day—perhaps, when we are older. I have been through the mill."

"It has ground you—fine."

"Don't say that, Tim! I have listened to you talking about yourself, but don't ask me about myself. That seems unfair, but even in the old days I used to keep things back. I wonder if there has ever been perfect confidence between a man and a woman?"

"I wonder," murmured Tim.

Next day he was engrossed by business, but before Daffy left he managed to find time to show her some of his drawings, and a small landscape painted in late autumn, an effect of atmosphere, the brown foothills seen through opalescent mists. Daphne said slowly:

"You can paint, Tim, it is in you to paint a fine picture.

I say it with little technical knowledge, but with all the conviction of a woman's instinct."

III

The Rokebys went on to Japan, leaving a gap which was filled with hard work. The suitable subdividing of the new ranches exacted meticulous attention, because they included much rough land. Jam had to be nicely apportioned to bread. Advertising, moreover, became a problem difficult to resolve. The old methods were inadequate. The country was glutted with printed matter: and settlers were beginning to discover that even sworn statements may prove sadly misleading. In the fall, when the pilgrims from East and mid-West filled the trains, Tim organised vast barbecues. A brass band was engaged for these festive occasions. Upon the eve of the first barbecue a somewhat seedy but plausible gentleman sought a private interview with Cooke and Brown. He revealed himself as an advance agent connected with a certain unscrupulous journal. He told Cooke jauntily that a bright "send-off" could be secured for a thousand dollars. Cooke listened blandly.

"You propose to boom us?"

"Sky-high, Mr. Cooke."

"For a thousand dollars?"

"Yes, Sir. A refusal would hostilise strong interests."

"Tim," said Cooke, in the same bland tone, "kindly tell this gentleman what we think of him."

Tim could be trusted to rise to such occasions. He shewed his teeth in a wide grin, as he said:

"You are very kind. We think that this is a blackmailing scheme. Take your choice of the door or the window."

"You'll be mighty sorry for this."

"You prefer the—window?"

"We'll make you two Britishers squeal."

Tim rose swiftly: the seeker after "graft" fled.

Cooke laughed, but he said gravely enough:

"We're up against an unscrupulous gang. It was bound to come sooner or later."

"What can they do?"

"You'll see. The country is getting rotten with this sort of thing. Shooting used to keep it down, but shooting seems to be going out of fashion, more's the pity."

"If he is going to hurt us, I wish I'd hurt him."

"He would have squealed before he was hurt."

Soon afterwards a series of articles began to appear, cleverly attacking the firm's methods. Cooke consulted a famous solicitor who was also a barrister, and an expert upon libel law. He counselled inaction. Action, he pointed out, would be very expensive, and the issue doubtful. On his advice the barbecues were abandoned.

And then trouble began with some of the men who held land under contract, men who had paid a small sum to bind a bargain, and then broken the spirit of that bargain by doing nothing, holding unimproved land for a rise in price.

"Things are not quite so rosy," said Cooke. "Somebody is behind these malcontents."

Nevertheless the sales continued.

By this time the business had become exceedingly complicated. Lack of ready money is at the root of most mundane evils, and although we may assume as an axiom that credit is the life-blood of a new country, still even credit must have gold behind it, as the enthusiastic supporters of Mr. Bryan discovered. The banks throughout the State were getting nervous. They had financed this immense land boom, accepting as security innumerable mortgages. The more conservative pointed out to their respective boards that banking was not quite on all fours with the real-estate business. Mortgages had, occasionally, to be foreclosed. Bankers found themselves metamorphosed in a night into farmers and horticulturists. Probably pressure was brought to bear from the East and from Europe. The fact remains, when we survey the history of this period, that money be-

came dear long before the dry seasons came. Cooke and Brown held sheafs of notes which represented gold, but the banks wanted more collateral security and offered in return less gold.

And the running expenses of our firm were enormous.

IV

The Cherub was now a two-year-old, and frisky for his years. Tim adored him. This may surprise some of the readers of this chronicle, for Tim has been presented so far, as intensely preoccupied with his own development, a healthy victim of ambitions which preyed upon every able-bodied man in the community. As a father we do not envisage him clearly. It is even doubtful whether Magdalena quite realised what Tim felt about his small son, or how large he bulked in Tim's future. The normal father hardly ever talks of his children, if he is much engrossed in working for them. But Tim regarded his boy as part of himself, clay to the hand of a potter. The Cherub was to be an Etonian and an Oppidan, making none of his sire's blunders. He was to develop along natural lines, no "cribbing and confining," no labelling, no cotton wool, a son of the West who would profit by the wisdom of the East.

The child's beauty appealed to Tim immensely. The little fellow seemed to have taken from his parents what was most admirable in each. He had Tim's strength, and Magdalena's sweetness of disposition.

But he had inherited something else, that dreadful taint which has been such a scourge to the children of Anglo-Saxon and Latin countries. The discovery of this crept stealthily upon Tim: it came as the fog comes from the Pacific, stealing across the landscape in filmy mists, heightening its beauty for a time, and then slowly blotting out all colour and form, a dense cloud of impenetrable gloom.

A cold in the head drifted to the chest. The Cherub

began to cough. Treatment stopped the cough. The child's beauty was strangely enhanced for a few months. His eyes sparkled with ethereal light, upon his round cheeks glowed a deeper rose, his lips were a vivid carmine. The health-seekers would stop to speak of him to Magdalena when mother and child took the air together.

"What a cherub!" they would remark.

Magdalena, beaming with pride, would reply:

"Ohé—we call him that."

That summer was particularly dry. The ocean fogs lay far out at sea, kept at bay by the land breeze which blew hot and dry from the torrid valleys beyond the Santa Lucia mountains. The fine white dust settled everywhere, inflaming sensitive membranes, driving housewives to despair and thirsty men to drink.

The Cherub began to cough again. Tim was anxious, but a doctor, who was ignorant of Magdalena's family, reassured him. Tim's own throat was sore and inflamed.

"After the rains the cough will go."

Magdalena hugged this comfort to her bosom. But, suddenly, out of some pigeonhole of memory, fluttered a hideous apprehension.

"Teem," she said, clutching him, "I am frightened."

"Frightened?"

"I remember Dolores, my sister. She die when I was eight years old. I see her. Ay de mi! And to-day I hear her."

"You heard her?"

"Baby cough just like Dolores."

Tim kissed her wet eyes, quoting the doctor, reassuring her that coughs were all alike, but Magdalena shook her head.

"Baby will go, like Dolores. Yes, I know."

"Never!" said Tim vehemently.

CHAPTER IV

DROUGHT

I

EARLY the next morning on his way to the office, Tim called upon the Doctor, who happened to be the personal friend rather than the medical attendant of a family that seldom needed his services. Tim and he often fished and shot quail in company, and probably there is nothing in this world which brings a couple of men so intimately together as camp life in a new country.

Wason was a bachelor, on the wrong side of fifty. Invariably, Tim's intimate friends had been men older than himself. They were attracted by youth and high spirits. He, in his turn, had a hankering for knowledge and experience. Wason was a thin tall fellow, very active physically and mentally, and a New Englander who had been in Santa Barbara about two years. He possessed independent means, interfering but little with the old practitioners, devoting time and money to bacteriology.

Tim's face alarmed him.

"Anything wrong?"

"My wife is terrified, Wason. She believes that the Cherub has consumption. I never told you, but Magdalena's brothers and sister died of consumption."

Wason looked as grave as Tim.

"What on earth made you hide that from me?"

"I had forgotten it, so had she. Do you mean to say that it makes much difference?"

"Yes," said Wason curtly. "What we call a predisposi-

tion to the disease counts enormously. Do you mean to say that they *all* went that way?"

"All."

Wason groaned.

"What a damnable scourge it is! However, let us hope that this is a false alarm. You two are such healthy people that I never suspected any taint. Has the boy lost weight?"

"A little."

"Any night sweats?"

"No, but the cough keeps him awake."

"I'll see the child at once, and let you know."

"Thanks."

Tim went on to the office, where he found Cooke, to whom he communicated his fears. The senior partner cheered him up.

"Look at me. I left England because the apex of both lungs was affected. And, to-day, I'm as sound as a bell. I don't believe the boy has it, but if there is a little trouble it will yield to treatment in this climate."

Tim tried, not very effectively, to concentrate his mind upon business. Two hours later Wason telephoned to him to call at his house. One glance at Wason's face was sufficient. Tim gasped out:

"Magdalena was right?"

"There is some inflammatory consolidation of the right lung. It would be criminal on my part to make light of it to you, although I have calmed the poor little mother. But I am afraid the case may prove acute. There has been a change since I last saw the child."

Tim sank into a chair, haggard and trembling. Wason spoke incisively, but with great sympathy.

"I must explain what I mean by acute. The progress of phthisis, as a general rule, is slow and chronic, particularly with adults, but with children, where there is predisposition and exciting inflammatory causes, the ravages are swift."

"Galloping consumption."

"It has been well named. We are confronted with that possibility."

"Oh, my God!"

"Tim, I shall fight for this child as if he were my own!"

"I know that."

"And now I want to speak to you about something else. Mrs. Brown will insist upon nursing her child."

"Of course."

"I hold tuberculosis to be infectious when there is any latent taint in the system. Opinion is divided—it is still raging—but Koch's experiments have convinced me, apart from my own researches. I do not think that a perfectly healthy person would be quite safe if constantly exposed."

"You are not suggesting that Magdalena should be separated from the Cherub?"

Wason remained silent. Tim continued:

"She will refuse."

"I fear so."

"I know it."

"I had to tell you. For the rest, you must do what you can. I'll watch her as closely as the boy."

"I'll take them anywhere—anywhere."

"No: the climate here is equable. Special symptoms must be dealt with. Tim, you must trust me."

"I do—I do, but you have scared the very life out of me."

"I had to make you realise the gravity of the situation. Co-operate with me, fight with me against little stupidities and negligences. We must guard against changes of temperature, fatigue, exposure, dietetical indiscretions."

Wason continued, explaining his method of treatment, avoiding, as far as possible, the pathology of the case.

Tim listened, sucking hope from Wason's authoritative tones, but alone, with the impending horror of meeting Magdalena, his fortitude deserted him. He went for a walk, grappling with his fears, conquering them by force of will. But as he strode back to his own house, he met a rich health-seeker, taking air and sunshine in a nurse's com-

pany. One of the doomed, he accosted Tim cheerily, and spoke of the improvement in his condition. Emaciated, racked by cough, a victim of other complications, he was crawling along, leaning heavily upon his nurse's arm. And yet the strange buoyancy which characterises his malady, the spes phthisica, sustained him.

"I'm getting along fine, ain't I, Nurse?"

"That you are."

Tim felt sick. He reached home to find the Cherub playing with Magdalena in the garden. He looked the picture of health as he ran towards his father. Tim picked him up, kissed him, and turned to face a smiling mother.

"Dr. Wason has been here. He was so kind. And very angry with me for being frightened."

"So am I," said Tim: and the laugh with which he further reassured her was not, perhaps, the least of many achievements.

II

Six months later the boy was dead.

All the premonitory symptoms became intensely aggravated. In the end the child died of exhaustion and emaciation. A tiny skeleton was laid to rest in the cemetery. Husband and wife were affected differently: Tim choked down his emotion with grim despair; Magdalena gave it expression in prolonged fits of passionate weeping.

Finally Tim took her away to Honolulu. The sea voyage, going and returning, restored something of her former equanimity, but she looked ten years older and much thinner.

Tim went back to the office.

Cooke talked in his usual optimistic vein, but Tim perceived clearly enough that his partner had become anxious. The contract-holders were giving more and more trouble. Men who held land and refused to improve it were in arrears with their payments. To evict them meant the ad-

vertising of an abominable situation: not to evict them was a tacit confession of weakness, the encouragement of other malcontents, and an acceptance of a slap in the face from their enemies, who insidiously instigated the worst offenders. Cooke concluded cheerfully:

"It will be O. K. if we have plenty of rain."

Everybody made this remark several times a day. All members of the community were affected. Store-keepers who financed the small farmers stared helplessly at the blue skies: bankers stared as helplessly at their ledgers, and wished, too late, that they had conducted their business upon more conservative lines. The cattlemen, sheepmen, and big wheat farmers faced disaster with blanching lips. Nevertheless public opinion decided that Southern California could weather one dry season, long overdue according to the statisticians. Cooke said:

"We shall just scrape through."

The dry year came.

Perhaps the hardest thing to bear was the jubilant croaking of the silurians and mossbacks, the fortunate few who had remained passive during years of feverish activity, who had risked nothing, sitting indolently upon what they possessed, predicting disaster to their enterprising brethren.

This was their hour of triumph, and they made the most of it.

The banks behaved admirably, standing shoulder to shoulder in solid phalanx, but all were strained to breaking point. The political situation aggravated their difficulty in carrying the dead weight of impecunious customers. The Popocrats and Silverites brayed their plausible doctrines from every street corner. To be a "gold-bug" in those unhappy days was to invite personal assault.

III

During these arid months, the work in the office dwindled to the perfunctory keeping of accounts. One clerk

sufficed: Fatty and Skinny were dismissed: outside expenses were pared to the irreducible minimum.

Cooke and Tim talked together, for there was nothing else to do. Insensibly Tim absorbed Cooke's philosophy. Sometimes Wason would join them. Cooke was saturated with the agnosticism of Huxley and Ingersoll, and too busy to work out problems other than the conduct of concrete affairs, such as the sale and subdivision of land, the tactful handling of customers, and the adjustment of conflicting interests.

Abstractions bored him. He was temperamentally a hedonist albeit a stickler for law and order if his own pleasures were threatened. He lived joyously in the present, liked a sound glass of wine and a good cigar, and could thoroughly enjoy both whether it rained or not.

He hated poverty and vice because anything disagreeable affected his own comfort. He was scornfully derisive of crooked dealing, because he was profoundly of opinion that it paid to be honest. Wason's New England conscience —he was the son of a Presbyterian minister—constrained him to defend doctrines which Cooke pronounced obsolete and untenable.

"One must have a standard, Cooke."

"Let the law of the land provide it."

"That law is built upon the solid rock of a higher law, God's law, the Ten Commandments."

"Oh, Moses——! There's an amusing story of Ingersoll and Moses. Have you heard it?"

"More than once from you. I hate argument bolstered up by anecdote. It comes to this, if there is no God, and no hereafter, and no Law higher than what I suppose you call the coagulated wisdom of centuries, what is to restrain a man from committing, let us say, murder, provided he is clever enough not to be found out? I know enough to kill you, if I wanted to do it, without running the slightest risk of detection. I could inoculate you with cholera morbus, attend you as your physician, sign your death cer-

tificate and collect my fees from your estate. What prevents me? My conscience. My conviction that I should be arraigned and judged guilty hereafter."

"Do you affirm that Huxley was conscienceless?"

"Certainly not. But the fact that Huxley and Tyndall and Bradlaugh were men who lived useful and blameless lives proves nothing. They obeyed the standard which each adopted for himself."

"Of course."

"But if each man is to be a law unto himself, for that is what it comes to ultimately, each man will interpret that law to suit himself. I have known many loose livers, but I swear to you that I have never known one who did not attempt to justify his sexual wanderings, not one!"

Tim found himself uncomfortably warm. Wason continued:

"Take away the higher law, and the lower law must be undermined. There must be stern and governing truths behind human conduct."

Cooke never lost his temper in an argument. He said affably:

"Good old Wason! You don't infect us with cholera morbus in order to achieve a tremendous reputation by wiping out the epidemic because you're scared of eternal punishment. You Christians are all alike."

"Are we?" said Wason grimly. "Shall I retort that you agnostics are all alike in accusing us of doing good in the hope of a heavenly reward and shunning evil for fear of future punishment? Doing good, for good's sake, is, I suppose, the monopoly of atheists. I have no stomach for these arguments: they lead no whither."

"Perhaps, but Tim and I are interested in knowing where you stand."

"I'll tell you. My belief in God goes deeper than what you call revealed religion: and is independent of it. God reveals Himself to me personally. I believe in Him because I cannot explain what I know to be the good in me if He

is non-existent. When I follow and obey that instinct I am happy. *That I know.* When I ignore it and wander from it I am unhappy, and a radiating source of unhappiness to others. Tim, what about a day's quail-shooting?"

IV

When they were alone over a camp-fire, Wason said to Tim:

"I don't like Cooke."

Tim replied warmly.

"He's one of the best. Cheery, kind, clever, and absolutely straight."

"Is he straight? Would he stand a big test?"

"I'd stake my life on it."

Wason said very drily:

"You would be very foolish."

The test came some months afterwards. Up till now the firm had been able to meet their obligations, raising money, when it became due, by hypothecating their collateral securities. Of these securities there remained some one hundred and twenty thousand dollars in Bills Receivable, promissory notes, for the most part, representing what was left of the profits on the Santa Margarita after a settlement had been effected with the banks.

In fine, these particular securities were gilt-edged because they covered highly improved property, and, allowing amply for the depreciation in land values, were secured by first mortgages which had been half paid. Everything else was in the hands of the banks as security against the payment of the three tracts lying to the south of Santa Barbara. And now another big cash payment upon those tracts was due. Cooke and Mrs. Cooke went to San Francisco, leaving Tim in sole control of the business. Cooke took with him the nest egg to convert into gold. Three days later Tim received the following letter:

"My dear Tim,

"I send you a draft on the local bank for sixty thousand dollars. It is yours: and you can do what you like with it. I have taken my half, and booked a passage to Buenos Ayres. When you read this Mrs. Cooke and I shall be at sea. If you are wise you will leave Southern California and start elsewhere with this capital. Join me, if you like, and we'll retrieve our fortunes in a country which is just beginning to go ahead, the Argentine. I could write reams explaining and excusing my bolting. A few lines will suffice. To stay on, fighting hopelessly, against circumstances we cannot control, means bankruptcy and ruin. The dry year has crippled us terribly. Another short season and the shutters would have to go up. I have spent hours over our accounts. Rain might save us, but I doubt it, because, rain or no rain, California cannot recover in less than five years. We should starve slowly. Frankly, I am too old to begin again. So I have cut the Gordian knot in my own way.

"Good luck to you and forgive me. I have to think of my wife, and you must think of dear little Magdalena. This money is really hers. Cut loose, Tim, as I have done, and let the banks take over our business, which, in every sense of the word, is theirs already."

"Your sincere friend,

"Harvey Cooke."

This unexpected blow fell with shattering violence. Tim told Magdalena, but she could not appreciate the issues involved. She kissed and consoled her husband, affirming her belief in his judgment and ability, insisting that he should use this money according to the dictates of his conscience, not hers, but she added mournfully:

"Teem, our baby is here, you will not go away, no?"

"I must talk to Wason," said Tim.

Wason read Cooke's letter and shrugged his shoulders. His silence exasperated the young man.

"Damn it! Say something, Wason."

"Cooke is a coward. He has imposed an intolerable

burden on your shoulders. If this is the result of his philosophy, it stands gravely indicted. Another instance of self-justification by a man who is a law unto himself."

"I am nearly crazy," said Tim.

V

The temptation to follow Cooke gripped him unmercifully. What restrained him? Dare we answer such a question? He could not answer it himself at the time, but long afterwards he came slowly to the conclusion that something inculcated by the Vicar, something transcending cut-and-dried teaching, something which may be termed influence or example, rose up to confront this great moral exigency.

Let the other fellow worry!

That was a jest often on Cooke's lips. He had passed on his "worry" to the junior partner, counselling him to transfer it swiftly to the banks. Tim asked himself what the Vicar of Little Pennington would do in such an emergency. That question was easily answered. During a long laborious life the Vicar had shouldered the worries of others.

"I shall fight it out alone," said Tim to Magdalena.

She clung to him.

"You are my brave Teem. How I love you!"

"But if this goes, your little dowry, we should be penniless."

"Ohé! I have my one-tenth interest in Agua Caliente."

Tim nodded. He had forgotten that. And it was worth remembering, for Agua Caliente was developing into a famous health resort. The one-tenth interest, ever increasing, represented a small income of not less than one hundred dollars a month.

"Yes, you have that," he muttered.

"We have that, mi querido."

Tim went to see James Mackinnon, laying the facts before him as succinctly as possible. In silence Mackinnon listened: then he held out his hand:

"I am proud to be your friend, Tim. I will help you. But I am sadly in need of help myself."

These two, the man old in affairs, the young fellow stimulated to supreme endeavour, gazed at each other across a table piled high with papers. They met upon the common ground of unmerited misfortune. It was a great moment for Tim.

"We must go to the city together," said Mackinnon.

They did so.

Mackinnon interviewed the cashier of the metropolitan bank which virtually controlled Tim's fortunes.

To the last Cooke's genius for administration manifested itself. Tim received from a city attorney an instrument which conveyed to him, his heirs and assigns, all of Cooke's interest in the firm, in consideration, so the instrument ran, of sixty thousand dollars, gold coin of the United States. For an hour Tim waited while his fate was determined. Would they scrap him? It was in their power to do so. He was young, and a Britisher. He could sell land when pilgrims were eager to buy: but Cooke was known, far and wide, as the manipulator, the schemer, the creator of a complex business. Tim repeated to himself axioms current on the Pacific Slope. "Corporations have no bowels": and "Friendship cuts no ice in business."

Without reservations, he had placed the sixty thousand dollars in James Mackinnon's hands. He could keep every cent of it. A payment of nearly double that amount was overdue.

Tim decided that he would be scrapped. In a moment of pardonable suspense and weakness, he found himself reflecting that a scrapping would make a free man of him. Magdalena and he could begin again, at the bottom of the ladder.

Three men received him courteously: the fourth was Mac-

kinnon. Tim could glean nothing from his impassive face, except the instinctive conviction that an ordeal was to come. Everything depended upon how Mr. Timothy Brown would acquit himself.

It was another fight—to a finish.

VI

The cashier spoke first. Tim had met him before. He was a small desiccated man, very grey, one who had grown old in the service of a great institution, one who had weathered storms. His manner was delusively mild and deprecating.

"Please sit down, Mr. Brown."

Tim was strangely reminded of the Vicar and the hard Windsor chair upon which he had wriggled uneasily scores of times.

"How old are you?"

"Eight and twenty."

"And married?"

Tim bowed. The cashier fiddled with a pen, but he held Tim's eyes throughout the interview.

"On the part of my colleagues and myself, I wish to express our approval of what you have done in placing the conduct of this unhappy affair unreservedly in our hands. Of Mr. Cooke I prefer to say nothing. He has bolted, taking with him money, which, in the strictest legal sense is his, and in no other. Had your firm been forced into liquidation to-day, this money would have been absorbed."

"I know that," said Tim.

"Good! An understanding of that sort clears the air. You seem to enjoy remarkable health and strength."

"I'm all right, sir."

"Good again. I come to the point. Are we justified at this particular crisis in entrusting so young a man with the sole management of a complex business? What have

you to say to—*us?* Speak quite frankly. Submit your claims. I can promise you this: they will be carefully considered."

Tim said simply:

"Mr. Cooke is entitled to all the credit for thinking out the general scheme upon which we worked, but I can claim, I think," he glanced at Mackinnon, who nodded solemnly, "a personal knowledge of the men to whom we sold land. I shewed them the land, and, ever since, while Mr. Cooke remained in the office, I have been on the ranches getting to know our customers intimately. It would be impossible now, even if it were advisable, to alter or even to modify the plan upon which we have worked. In that sense Mr. Cooke's work has been done and well done, gentlemen."

The cashier assented.

"What remains is to collect money due, to wind up the business gradually, and to evict contract-holders who are making trouble."

"Evict?"

From the cashier's tone it was impossible to guess whether or not he approved of eviction.

"Mr. Cooke was against eviction. I deferred to his riper judgment. All the same——"

"Yes, let us have your opinion."

"If I had a free hand I should evict certain men. They have been stirred up to make trouble."

"Stirred up, what do you mean?"

Tim told the story of the attempted black-mailing. The cashier listened with impassive features, but when Tim finished, he said quietly:

"A thousand dollars would have secured the good-will of these journals."

"Yes, but at the sacrifice of an essential principle. And we should have opened the door to other black-mailers."

"Are we to understand, Mr. Brown, that you propose to begin an active campaign against these contract-holders? It will stir up a lot of trouble."

"I know that, gentlemen. But it's like this. A hundred at least of these contract-holders have the money to make a one-third payment and receive a deed secured by mortgage. The dry year has not affected them. They want the land, but they're waiting to see what the next season is like, gambling, in short, with our money. If I evict half a dozen of the most recalcitrant the others will march into line."

"I follow you."

"I suggest, gentlemen, that you owe it to me to give me a trial. I ask for nothing more. I will do my best, and I do know the country, the conditions and the people. I have our sales book here. I can go into every case with you, if you wish it."

The cashier glanced at his colleagues.

"I am empowered, Mr. Brown, to speak for the Bank. We accept your proposition. Deal with these contract-holders as you think fit. Times are tight and money is dear, but we will pay the amount overdue to the owners of the three ranches. In other words, we will advance you sixty thousand dollars, the amount—er—*lifted* by your late partner. This leaves you short of working capital."

"It does."

"We are willing to finance you within reasonable limits. You must regard yourself as our general manager, responsible to us. Cut expenses."

"They are cut."

"Well, it is up to you to make good. You have our heartiest good wishes and—congratulations. We are, unhappily, at the mercy of the elements, but I believe that you will do all that can be done."

The interview was at an end. Tim lunched with Mackinnon. They walked together to the Palace Hotel. Mackinnon said curtly:

"Tim, my boy, that was a personal triumph."

"I owed it to you, sir. I cannot thank you enough."

"You are mistaken. They would have turned down my

own son if he had failed to satisfy them. The odds were against you, but you won the confidence of the shrewdest banker in this city in five minutes. I am very pleased."

"If we have rains," said Tim, "I shall make good."

"That is my opinion also."

CHAPTER V

WHEN TROUBLES COME

I

TIM returned to Santa Barbara conscious of an uplifting which he had not known since the Cherub's death. The autumn was at hand, the autumn which would bring rains and prosperity to this parched land. He gazed at the brown foot-hills as he sped through them, identifying himself with them, believing that the colour would flow back into his life, the soft tender shades of heliotrope and pink which stole upon the landscape as the sun declined.

James Mackinnon and he talked cheerfully of the lessons gleaned from a harvestless year, the necessity of husbanding water, of boring artesian wells, of keeping sufficient hay and straw to tide cattle over a drought.

Such topics were on the lips and in the minds of all men. Recuperating influences were at work. The terrible dry year was over. Southern California would wake up from her long sleep, re-invigorated and refreshed to bring forth more abundantly.

But everywhere, except upon the irrigated areas, lay the signs of catastrophe. By the springs and dried-up water courses the bones of cattle whitened in the sun, the women and children looked gaunt and parched: the men hanging about the stores waiting for work stared sullenly at the passengers who were flitting past them, able to leave and glad to leave a stricken country.

The news that Tim was captain of a gallant ship, partially crippled, but still seaworthy, became known.

A few guessed the truth, and the majority of these—it is

to be feared—commended the prudence of the Señor Cooke.

Within a week the trouble with the contract-holders became acute. Tim served notices of eviction upon half a dozen men, which caused an indignation meeting of the others. Amongst them was a fellow called Ginty, an ill-conditioned, powerful ruffian, with a reputation for being a "bad-man." He had, indeed, shot down a fellow citizen in a drunken brawl, escaping punishment upon the threadbare plea of self-defence. The men who had paid for their ranches were against the contract-holders, whose unimproved patches remained an eye-sore, and a menace to progress.

Many of these ranchers proved staunch friends to Tim, keeping him "posted," as the phrase runs. Through them Tim learned of the indignation meeting and the resolutions carried thereat. Ginty, it appeared, had constituted himself the ring-leader, proclaiming his intention of settling with the Britisher at a pistol's point.

Tim received a letter——

"DERE SIR,

"This is to tell you that youve bitten off more'n you kin chew, and must climb down pronto. We means bizness. That ther is a cold fact. The land is ourn and we mean ter freeze onter it till the cows come home. If yer huntin trouble were the boys to make it for ye.

"Quit foolin with

"CONTRACT HOLDERS."

Tim handed this epistle to the Sheriff who could be trusted to do whatever was required. Ginty and his friends became inflamed by bad language and worse drink. Finally Tim learned from a sure source that Ginty was ripe for trouble and coming into town to make it. Tim consulted with his only clerk, a stout fellow, loyal to Tim, who had been with the firm since its inception. The two held council. A door opened between the outer and inner office. Tim moved his desk so that it faced this. He placed a

six-shooter in the centre drawer. George, the clerk, carried a smaller pistol in his coat pocket. Tim instructed George to receive Ginty politely, and to ask him to sit down in the outer office. When Tim was ready to receive the fire-eater, George would show him into the inner office. He would be invited to sit down opposite him, facing the window, with his back to the door. Tim concluded:

"You will be near the door, George. If he tries to draw his gun, shoot! I shall shoot too."

They rehearsed the business, moving the chair to one side, so as to preclude the possibility of shooting through Ginty at each other. When Tim was satisfied with these preliminary arrangements, he said to George:

"I don't want to kill this blackguard, but I'd sooner kill than be killed. He thinks that I'm lying awake at night scared to death. We must disabuse his mind of that."

"How?"

"Cool him down for one thing. When he blusters in, you say that I'm busy. Come to my room and stand on the threshold. Announce the fellow in a loud voice. I'll do the rest. It's up to us, George, to turn a possible tragedy into a comedy. See?"

"You bet!"

Tim and George did a little pistol practice.

Ginty appeared some three days later. George asked him to sit down. Then he opened the communicating door, and said:

"Mr. Ginty wants to see you."

Tim said clearly:

"What Mr. Ginty?"

"Mr. Thomas Ginty from the San Julian."

"I'm very busy. I'll see Mr. Ginty in three minutes. Look up his case. Bring me the sales book. Give Mr. Ginty the paper."

Ginty—so George reported afterwards—listened to this easy talk with some surprise. Like all ignorant persons he expected, being defiant, to meet defiance. This courteous

reception, this strange indifference to the presence of a "bad man," disconcerted him. He sat down, open-mouthed and open-eyed, and waited.

Tim thought it prudent to allow him five minutes. A longer time might have been impolitic. Policy was a word often upon Cooke's lips. If Ginty could be handled discreetly, the banks would approve. We must admit that it was a delicate situation for a young, hot-blooded man.

Tim placed an arm-chair for his visitor. It is not easy to shoot from an arm-chair; and if Ginty leapt to his feet,—as was probable—before "pulling his gun," why then, so Tim reasoned, he would be covered by George before his hand dashed to his pocket. Tim was delighted with George: he exhibited no nervousness: a pleasant smile flickered about lips which indicated plenty of pluck and determination.

When the five minutes had passed, Tim went to the door, marched into the office, and greeted Ginty affably:

"Good morning, Mr. Ginty. Glad to see you."

He held out his hand. Ginty rose awkwardly, met Tim's careless glance, and, after a moment's hesitation, extended his hand. Tim gripped it hard. Ginty, although vinously exalted, had no doubt of Tim's muscular strength.

"Come into my room, and let's have a talk. George, you can come too, and tell me what I have forgotten about this particular case."

Forgotten!

Ginty, as fencers say, was *touched*. He followed Tim into the inner room, and sat down in the arm chair. Tim sat down also, telling George to place the sales book and other papers before him.

"Page 119," said George.

"Thank you, now let's see. Oh, yes. You selected lot 23 on the San Julian more than two years ago. You paid down twenty-five dollars, and received our usual contract. A further payment was due of two hundred and fifty dollars six months after date. Am I correct?"

"I guess so," growled Ginty. He was completely nonplussed, upset at discovering that his case required looking up.

"It appears," said Tim, "that you have made no further payment since the first twenty-five dollars. Mr. Cooke, as perhaps you know, attended to the business end. Did he press you at all for these overdue payments?"

"Yes, he did."

"Times were good then. Tell me frankly why you didn't meet them? George, you can go. I'll call you if I want you. Now, as between man and man, Mr. Ginty, why did you not make these payments? I take it that you had some money, or you wouldn't have wanted this land."

"That's my business."

"But it's mine, as well. Perhaps you regarded this first small payment as what we call option money. You may have hoped, not unreasonably, to sell your land at a higher figure before the second payment fell due?"

Ginty squirmed. This, indeed, had been his idea. He was an ignorant fool, but fools—according to Harvey Cooke—might forget what was due to others whilst preserving a lively sense of what was due to themselves.

Cooke would say: "I never yet engaged a fool who forgot to draw his salary." Ginty maintained a sullen silence. Tim went on cheerfully:

"We are having a little trouble with some of our contract-holders, and I received a letter a few days ago which was unsigned. I turned it over to the Sheriff. I dare say you had nothing to do with it; but it was worth money to me, for it furnished conclusive evidence that some of our contract-holders deliberately mean to repudiate their obligations."

Ginty wrestled with these long words, as Tim expected and desired.

"Mr. Cooke," continued Tim, "treated our contract-holders with astounding leniency and consideration. Some of you, I mention no names, have been playing our game.

We secured these three big ranches on option. But when the time came to pay up, we paid. Some properties we let go, forfeiting the option money. You gentlemen seem to want it both ways. You pay down a small sum to secure an option upon valuable property, and when the time comes to make good, you decline to do so, but you hold on to the land. Is that your idea of doing square business?"

Ginty expectorated.

"Do you want something for nothing? I am anxious to look at the matter from your point of view. Are you, in short, asking me for charity? Would you like me to *give* you this land?"

"Charity? Who's talking o' charity?"

"I am. The long and short of it is that some of you are behaving like beggars in the street. I am beginning to remember you, sir. I shewed you that land. You told me you proposed to fence it, put in a crop, and build a house and barn. I gathered that you were a hustler, a genuine settler, not a gambler. Was I wrong?"

"I waited to see how the season would pan out."

"That season was a good one."

"Mebbe I got cold feet. The land out thar ain't what you fellers cracked it up ter be. Not by a damn sight!"

Tim smiled genially. If he could lure this savage on to talk, sooner or later he would trip himself up.

"I see. You think that you were imposed upon?"

"I ain't the only one as thinks so."

"Good! We are getting to bedrock. It's a pleasure to talk with you, Mr. Ginty. I may assume you consider you have been imposed upon inasmuch as you paid down twenty-five dollars to secure 200 acres of land, valued rightly or wrongly, at twenty-five dollars an acre; and you have kept this land unimproved in the hope of selling it for more than twenty-five dollars an acre; and you have failed to carry out your promise to fence and plough and build; and you have held this property two years, and you want

to go on holding it although you have suffered such gross imposition?"

Ginty said nothing. Tim continued in the same suave tone, never raising his voice, and never taking his eyes from the other's congested face.

"Let us figure a bit. You are out twenty-five dollars. I am out the interest on five thousand dollars, at 8 per cent for two years, say eight hundred dollars. Which of us has had the best of it, eh?"

"I dunno or keer overly much."

"But I do know, and I do care. Now let me impress this upon you, and you will be doing your friends on the San Julian a kindness if you repeat to them what I say. I'll deal with your case alone. We have offered to cancel your contract, which, as a matter of fact, was automatically cancelled long ago, when the first payment was not met. We have faced a big loss presuming that you would face a little loss, but——"

He paused smiling.

"But—what?"

"If you persist upon holding your contract, you become liable for arrears of interest. You have, so I presume, a home of sorts, horses, cows, and so forth. *I can attach the lot.* Let me finish. I am glad you have come in, for I propose to settle with you here and now. This is the original contract, of which you hold a duplicate. I make you this offer. Cancel it, and go your way. Or, renew it, and pay up arrears of interest. One more word. You may think that I am the sole owner of the San Julian?"

Ginty perceived an opportunity for being insolent and malicious: it never occurred to him that Tim presented it.

"No! I know damn well that the banks hev ye—that's why Cooke vamoosed."

"Perhaps you would prefer to deal with the banks?"

"I'm here to deal with you, young man."

"Good! We understand each other. If I vamoosed to-day, you would have to deal with the banks, and I warn

you that they would shew you no consideration whatever. They would attach every stick you possess to-morrow. Now I'm sure your time is valuable, and so is mine. I give you two minutes to decide"—Tim laid his watch upon the desk—"whether you will deal with me or the Sheriff. You will have to settle with somebody. Two minutes, Mr. Ginty. Can I offer you a mild cigar?"

Ginty scowled.

"You ain't a-goin' to flim-flam me."

Tim said civilly:

"I have no intention of flim-flamming or being flim-flammed. With your kind permission I'll go on with my work."

He bent over some papers. Behind Ginty, at short range, stood George, with his hand in his pocket. The centre drawer lay just open. Tim took a paper from it. Ginty stood up.

"I'll cancel my contrack."

This was done in due form. Ginty walked to the door, whence he flung a Parthian shaft:

"You've bested me, damn yer soul! But the dry years'll bust you, higher'n a kite!"

II

This was another fluid triumph, percolating to the minds of the contract-holders and eventually to the knowledge of the cashier of the metropolitan bank. Peace followed war. Many met their obligations: a few cancelled contracts and left the ranches.

But the rain did not come.

Tim might have stood the misery of those awful days had he apprehended bankruptcy alone. His greatest trial descended upon him when he was least able to bear it.

Magdalena became strangely listless.

But she told Tim that she suffered no pain, and there was no cough. Profuse perspiration at night and a rising

temperature indicated deep-seated trouble, but Wason was unable to locate it, till abdominal pains and ascytes set in.

Wason took Tim aside.

"It is tubercular peritonitis. If the swelling cannot be reduced an operation will be necessary."

Tim listened, grimly despairing.

"She will go as the boy went," he said slowly. "The luck is dead against me: it has always been so, always, always."

Wason counselled a move to San Francisco. Let experts decide! Tim agreed. Wason tried to be hopeful, citing clinical cases by the dozen. The operation would be capital, but fortunately there was no cardiac weakness, and no indication whatever that the lungs were affected.

"You must prepare her," said Wason.

Tim did so. To his immense surprise Magdalena accepted the truth calmly and hopefully. Afterwards, Tim wondered whether this optimism was merely a symptom of her malady, or whether she dissembled for love of him.

Magdalena ended by laughing at his solemn face.

"Look at Tia Maria Luisa! She has had the consumption for thirty years. It comes: it goes. Children die quick, quick! But I am an old married woman. Ohé! you won't get rid of me easily, my Teem."

Her gaiety was too severe a strain upon his self-control. He had nerved himself to bear anything except that. She was sitting in a chair, looking up at him, as she spoke. He fell upon his knees, burying his head upon her lap. Great sobs shook him, the expression of all that he had suppressed at the child's death and afterwards, when the work of seven years crumbled into fine white dust. She made no attempt to restrain this passionate outburst. Her thin hand played with his hair. Perhaps she was praying for him rather than for herself. When the paroxysm passed, she kissed his eyes, and then lay in his arms with a faint smile upon her lips. Not a word was spoken on either side. Tim noted a serene expression upon her face, an unmistakable happiness. He realised that his passion

of emotion had soothed and satisfied her. She had always been avid for the manifestation of tenderness, never weary of his assurance that he loved her, but of late, engrossed and harassed by business cares, he had neglected these sweet repetitions. Presently she said softly:

"Teem, you have made me ever so happy. Whatever happens, remember that. The Virgin has blessed me! I think of poor Dolores and the others who died so young. They never knew what I have known."

Her artless philosophy, her childish wisdom, her ability to measure love and to proclaim that she had been blessed no matter what the future might hold, produced a profound effect upon her husband. He remembered what he had said to Wason about the luck being against him. Had it? Already, before he was thirty, he had run the gamut of intense emotions. He had suffered horribly: he had triumphed, the bitter and the sweet of life had been his portion. He said humbly:

"You make me ashamed of myself."

The operation was performed by a specialist in San Francisco, at the California Women's Hospital. Tim was offered quarters there by the House Surgeon, an exception to a necessary rule being made in his case, for Wason told the surgeon that Tim's presence might mean life or death to the patient. Tim held Magdalena's hand, as she lay in bed, when the anaesthetist came in. They carried her to the operating theatre; and Tim was left alone with his thoughts. Magdalena's fortitude sustained him. She exhibited no fear, obeying the directions of the anaesthetist intelligently. As she passed into unconsciousness, she gripped Tim's hand with a strength which surprised him; and she called him by name hoarsely, in a voice he hardly recognised.

He paced up and down the road opposite to the hospital, staring at the windows upon the second floor. As soon as the operation was over, and Magdalena back in bed, her day-nurse promised to hang a towel out of the window.

An hour passed before the signal was given. Tim rushed into the Hospital, to meet the surgeon in the hall. The matron was with him. He said curtly to Tim:

"She is doing well; the operation was not so severe as I had feared."

Tim stammered out a few words of thanks.

Within a month Magdalena was back in Santa Barbara, convalescent, and—so far as could be predicted—likely to recover her former strength and health.

III

One shrinks from recording the months that followed. Hope died out of the hearts of the people as they stared day after day into the pitiless skies. In the remoter foothills squatters were starving. Public charity relieved them. Train after train left San Francisco loaded with flour and beans and bacon. Upon the ranges the cattle and horses perished. The young orchards, which represented so much money and labour and solicitude, became dusty deserts, exhibiting lines of leafless trees, scarecrows warning all beholders that horticulture without water is as the weaving of ropes out of sand. But Tim told himself that Magdalena had been spared.

While she lay senseless in the operating theatre Tim prayed to the God of his childhood, the beneficent Providence watching over Little Pennington. He had entreated a Personal Deity to stretch forth His hand and save! Reverting unconsciously to the teaching of his youth, believing for the moment that the God of Israel exacted sacrifice, he had laid upon the altar of his prayers a renunciation of mundane ambitions. He had bargained with Omnipotence, as millions have done in moments of agony and helplessness.

"Make me bankrupt, O God! but give me back my wife!"

Because that prayer had been answered, he confronted

valiantly the future. The banks could not help him, for they too were tottering to their fall. His ready money was exhausted. Magdalena and he moved into a cottage and discharged the two servants. The one-tenth interest from Agua Caliente became their sole source of income.

Alone in his deserted office, staring at ledgers and cash-books, ever reminded of former triumphs by the maps upon the walls, Tim had to chew the cud of this reflection.

If a coin, spun at hazard, had fallen with the eagle uppermost, he would have been in England with a fortune of at least one hundred thousand pounds.

CHAPTER VI

ADIOS!

I

IN the following May Tim was obliged to make a settlement with the metropolitan bank, which treated him not ungenerously. The change, in one sense, was for the better. Tim abandoned all interests, past, present, and future, as a principal in the big business which Cooke and he had organised upon lines which nobody criticised or condemned, upon lines, indeed, which were adopted by others —when prosperity returned to California. Two dry years in succession ruined Tim. The bank appointed him their general manager at a salary of two hundred dollars a month. Tim regained something of his former buoyancy, for a fixed salary meant increased comfort for Magdalena. The cashier added some pleasant words:

"We are well aware, Mr. Brown, that this must be a bitter pill for you to swallow, but it will clear your system. I can make no promises, but I am empowered to say this—if times mend, as they must, opportunities will be offered to you by us. This state needs youth and enthusiasm combined with integrity. We welcome new blood. Work for us, as you have worked for yourself, and the result may surprise you."

"Thank you, sir," said Tim.

George was retained also by the bank. Manager and man had little to do beyond the preparing of elaborate monthly reports, the collection of what money could be collected, and the financing of farmers who deserved such help.

It was, of course, Tim's duty to be at the office between the hours of nine and five. As a rule, the morning sufficed to write letters, answer them, and adjust accounts. The afternoons hung heavy upon active hands and wits. Wason suggested reading as a resource. Why not rub up one's Latin and Greek? Why should any knowledge, laboriously acquired, be suffered to atrophy from neglect? Tim, fired by this sound advice, plunged into the Classics. During six months he read through the Iliad, the comedies of Aristophanes, Terence's plays, Plautus, and Juvenal. Then, suddenly, he grew sick of them. He said to Wason:

"It's like looking on at cricket."

"Looking on? Yes. Well, why not play? You can't paint. The Bank would bar that. You've talked a lot to me about the colour of life. Try to set some of it forth in pen and ink. Write! I believe you can do it. You've done a lot of pamphleteering. You've a knack of vivid description. And you've had astonishing experiences. I say—write!"

Tim tackled this new job with ardour, fortified not only by Wason, but by another friend, the editor of the *Santa Barbara Banner,* essentially a man of letters, condemned by necessity to sling printer's ink because he lacked the creative gift. His name was Hoyt, and he happened to be of kin to Emerson and Lowell. A fine humanity informed Hoyt and an attractive Bohemianism. He afforded an amusing contrast to Wason, accusing him to his face of being hidebound by New England sanctions and objurgations. Hoyt was essentially imaginative, beholding life as it might be under happier conditions and with a wider scope for individual tendencies.

This had driven him to the West, but he had brought with him and retained the fastidiousness and refinements of the East. He wrote good commercial stuff salted and peppered for the California palate, but he abhorred, like Wason, anything which smacked of slipshod accomplishment. With

abundant leisure, which was denied to him, he might have become a critic del primisimo valore.

Tim wrote his first short story, and read it aloud to Magdalena, Wason, and Hoyt. Wason, poor fellow, tired after a long day's work, fell asleep: Magdalena was so furious with Wason that she was quite unable to give attention to the story. Before she heard the opening lines, she had decided that her clever Tim could write better short stories than Rudyard Kipling, if he chose to try. Hoyt suspended judgment, taking the manuscript home with him, asking Tim to drop in at the *Banner* office next day, after five.

Wason woke up, apologised abjectly, was forgiven, except by Magdalena, and played his part gallantly at the chafing-dish supper which followed.

Next day, Tim saw Hoyt alone. Rather to Tim's amusement, Hoyt had assumed a judicial air. He wore a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles: he sat upright in the editorial chair: he waved a minatory hand.

"It's rotten bad," began Hoyt, touching the manuscript gingerly, flicking at it with nicotine-stained finger-tips.

"I suppose so," said Tim.

Hoyt continued solemnly:

"Do you think I would tell you that if there was nothing else to be said? I can get this printed, Tim. I'll print it myself and pay current rates. It's what my readers want. It's full of false sentiment, false psychology and the technique——! Oh, God!"

"Take another shot," said Tim, as Hoyt paused to roll another cigarette.

"All the same, I'm surprised and delighted."

He lay back, laughing genially, surveying Tim above his spectacles, taking some tobacco from a delicately engraved silver snuff-box, which he always carried, and which indicated subtly the man's taste and love of craftsmanship. Tim laughed, too.

"You have it in you," declared Hoyt.

"What?"

"Ah! what? The thing I mean is invisible at present and indescribable. It's a sense of the dramatic in life, and something more, a sympathy, a kindliness, an invincible optimism."

"Go on firing," said Tim. "I wallow in this."

"May I do what I like with your script?"

"Of course."

Hoyt picked it up.

"Have you a rough draft?"

"No."

Hoyt tore up the manuscript and dropped it into the waste-paper basket.

"Now, listen to me. Is it possible, I wonder, to teach the young idea how to write? Yes, if the young idea is intelligent. Go on writing! I'll teach you punctuation and grammar by sending across galley slips for you to correct. It's easier to correct the mistakes of others, and much more fun. You can do some reviewing for me—for nothing. Slate 'em! Most of 'em deserve it. Write another yarn and submit it. Stick to what you know. Describe real people, real happenings! Construct a simple story in your mind. Don't wander from your theme; let it develop cumulatively. Be natural! Be yourself! Don't strain after effect, or bore people stiff by analysing too closely causes. I'll red-pencil what you write. I'll godfather you, because—well, because I believe that you are worth while. Have you sucked it all in?"

"Like mother's milk."

"Then, go and spoil more paper."

II

Tim obeyed. But he worked under constant disabilities. Afterwards, when he heard writers demanding inviolate silence, a room set apart for their use, and a faithful wife to keep distracting visitors at bay, he would think of his

literary apprenticeship and the disturbing elements which had to be ignored: the everlasting click of George's *Remington,* the street sounds, the men and women dropping in at all hours, asking, for the most part, idiotic questions which had to be answered patiently and courteously.

In time he achieved detachment. He learned to stop in the middle of a sentence, to pigeon-hole his fancy, to tie a string to some kite-like thought, and to concentrate attention upon his theme regardless of outside sounds.

It was invaluable discipline.

He had a facility in writing as in speech, which Hoyt deplored, contending that the best work was done with infinite labour and hesitation. He quoted Stevenson. "Play the sedulous ape!" He was unmerciful in his condemnation of cliché, and colloquial expressions used in narrative. Tim, not too thin-skinned after many bludgeonings, writhed and grimaced when Hoyt's tongue bit deep into a bit of sugary sentiment or pathos. But he came to prize his mentor's praise, cutting and revising copy with the best temper in the world. One day Hoyt said emphatically:

"This is jolly: there's mirth in it. You have a light touch, Tim: you must cultivate that."

Tim began a novel dealing with the more humorous side of ranch life, setting forth his blunders and the blunders of other men who embarked upon viticulture and horticulture with no knowledge other than what they had gleaned planting corn and raising hogs in the mid-west. Hoyt chuckled:

"This is the right stuff," he declared.

And then, when colour and mirth were creeping once more into Tim's life, even as they informed his writing, Magdalena began to cough!

III

Wason did not disguise his alarm from the distraught husband. The cough grew harder and more frequent.

Shortness of breath and a rise of temperature at night confirmed the diagnosis. Wason prescribed open-air treatment, cod-liver oil, tonics, everything known to the science of the nineties. Magdalena, who had grown plump again after the operation, lost flesh rapidly.

It was acute phthisis.

Happily she suffered little pain beyond what was caused by the difficulty in breathing. To the last, till the moment when coma preceded death, she remained hopeful and cheerful. Tim's hardest trial, an ordeal from which he would emerge broken and listless, was sitting beside her during long hours while she prattled of the holiday to be taken when her health was reëstablished, of the fun they would have together when Tim achieved fame and fortune as a novelist.

Forty-eight hours before she passed away, he had an illuminating glimpse into her mind. And he knew then that this artless gaiety had been assumed for his sake. He sat alone with her in the shelter which had been built in the garden, where she lived and slept.

"If I should go, Teem——"

He pressed her wasted hand, unable to speak.

"You will not grieve too much, no?"

"There will be nothing left—nothing."

"Mi querido, do not make it too hard for me. I always knew that the home in England was a dream, a heavenly dream. I loved to dream of that, just as I loved to think of the dream children, which we wanted so badly."

"I have only wanted you."

"How happy we have been! Teem, I shall tell my father that you watched out for me. But he knows, he knows. And if I must go, it is well. It is God's will. I am glad to think that I shall not grow old and fat and ugly and cross like poor Tia Maria Luisa. Is it unkind to say that? Teem, you have been so good to me. Will you be good to yourself—if I go? Because," her voice sank to a whisper, "I

shall be so unhappy over there if you are miserable and wretched here. I am afraid of that."

Could he lie at such a moment? He remained silent.

"You will have your work. It will be fine work, no? Ohé! I am so sure of that——" she sighed contentedly.

Tim stared at her, stupefied by grief and despair. He tried to envisage himself a week hence—alone. He prayed for her sustaining faith, but with a derisive sense of the futility of such prayers.

A struggle for breath followed. When the paroxysm passed, she asked quietly that her Confessor might be summoned.

That night the last solemn rites were administered. Tim knelt beside her, thankful at least that such solace was a true and blessed comfort to her.

Then she fell asleep.

IV

Magdalena flits through and out of this chronicle, leaving behind an epitaph cut deep in the heart of her husband. She belonged to a generation of wives whom the shrieking sisterhood of to-day denounce scornfully as chattels.

Sweetly and honestly she disavowed interest in politics, in high society, in business affairs. Art and literature touched her to mild enthusiasms.

A clever Englishwoman, as a rule, exercises her cleverness in being disagreeable to clever men. Magdalena's greatest virtue may be described as an incapacity to be disagreeable to anybody. She radiated warmth, being in the best sense of a much abused word, an amoureuse. Tim was never tempted to be unfaithful to his wife in thought or act, because she was proud of the passion which she felt for him. He knew her to be jealous, jealous of women with whom he talked upon subjects beyond her ken, jealous of men, also, who might beguile him from the home which she had created.

Her love became a beacon, keeping Tim from the reefs so long as she lived. Had it not been for her, he might have turned, as so many did during the dry years, to drink and kindred dissipations. He met other women afterwards, who affirmed themselves to be beacons, light-houses, indeed they were: but their light seemed to be turned inwards, not outwards, revealing the machinery which produced it, making the darkness without more dark.

Magdalena's light was as a lamp set in a window, the small, steady light gleaming over moorland and fen and sea which guides the weary traveller home, which makes him think of logs crackling in an open hearth, of a table simply spread, of the laughter of children, of tender encircling arms and sweet caresses.

V

Wason took him away after the funeral. They spent a month together in Monterey County amongst the sighing, singing pines and redwoods. For Wason's sake, not his own, Tim hid his misery. They tramped the hills together, returning to camp so tired that kind sleep came to them.

Over smouldering logs Wason would talk of the future, but Tim listened brooding upon the past.

He returned to Santa Barbara, to find a letter from the Vicar, written upon receipt of the telegram which contained the news of Magdalena's death. Tim hesitated before he opened the envelope. He shrank with loathing from stereotyped condolence.

"My dearest Son—

"Can you come home to me? I do not urge it. You must decide. I cannot write what is in my heart: although I can guess what is in yours. You are standing alone at the Gate of Sorrows. Would that I could stand beside you in this bitter hour, but that cannot be. I have

seen Daphne. She spoke much to me of Magdalena. Probably she will write to you. I understood from her that your business was of less importance to you than I had fancied. And between the lines of your more recent letters I have discerned an increasing interest in literature. If this be so, wouldn't this quiet village serve your purpose?

"I have not seen you, my boy, for more than ten years. My health at best is good, but life is uncertain. I have much to say, things which cannot be written.

"Come if you can, and soon.

"Your loving father,

"TERTIUS WHITE."

As he read this letter Tim could hear the cawing of the rooks in the tall elms behind the Vicarage: he could see, clustering about the church, the placid village dominated by tower and spire. What a cradle to lie down in and rest! Merely to think of Little Pennington furnished a soporific to a sleepless man. He beheld the Vicar growing old alone: he recalled the many friends who would greet him kindly, Arthur Hazel, Mary Nightingale, the Colonel and his wife, the cottagers who, from time to time, sent through the Vicar artless messages of peace and goodwill. His thoughts concerning all these dear people were clear and symmetrical as crystals.

And yet——

To return to Little Pennington a failure, broken in fortune and heart, and health—for health, too, had yielded to a strain terribly prolonged—to return as a pensioner upon the Vicar's bounty, to be constrained to play a part in the genteel comedy of rural life, to render due obeisance to Cæsar, to submit, for decency's sake, to social laws, so irritating to men who have lived in new countries, to do and say the real right thing according to Little Pennington tradition——!

He told himself very sorrowfully that it was impossible. A week later Daffy's letter arrived. Again he hesitated be-

fore he broke the seal. He had feared that the Vicar might say too much: a greater fear possessed him that Daffy might say too little.

"Dearest Tim,

"The Vicar has told me of your crushing sorrow. To you alone I can whisper that I, too, have suffered miserably, and because of that I can share your suffering. The distance between us is so dreadful. Time and space seem to divide us inexorably. Hopelessness and misery must be eating your heart and mind away. I can think of nothing to comfort you but this: Magdalena told me what you had been to her: she let me have a glimpse of what your inner life was, of the devotion and tenderness which she inspired in you, and which you inspired in her. That, Tim, is an imperishable happiness, a happiness which is given to few. Upon it I entreat you to build up your future, whatever that future may be.

"The Vicar says that he has asked you to come back to Little Pennington: but something tells me the time is not yet for that. It is impossible for him to realise what your life in California has been. I have dared to tell him to be prepared for disappointment. I have paved the way for a refusal which otherwise might have wounded him.

"I will write again.

"Your old friend

"Daffy."

Tim put these letters away in a despatch box.

VI

He went back to the office, to work which had become jejune and exasperating. His novel remained in a drawer. In any case, he would have found it difficult to write, because abundant rains were quickening all activities in the state. He became once more the slave of business

no longer his, with a vision of golden profits which had slipped through his fingers. One day he said to Wason:

"I can't stick it any longer."

"I understand. But more is needed than change of skies. Tim, you must try to get out of yourself—and stay out."

"What a counsel of perfection! Toss grief to the winds, eh?"

"No. Stand upon it! Don't let it stand upon you."

"I rise above it at moments, Wason, only to sink again fathoms deep below it into starless night."

Wason was a man of few words: Hoyt a master of many. Tim could speak with less reserves to Hoyt, although Wason had been, indeed, a tower of strength and silence. Hoyt spoke hopefully:

"You are like me, Tim. We have laboured abundantly, but the harvest will be gleaned by others. Riches would smother me. I should perish in the effort to spend my dollars before I died. We are two Bohemians. Let's admit it, and have done with it. You are right: you, being you, can't stick it. Then cut loose! Follow your instinct. This is a very big state, but it may be too small for you. Tell me, if you can, what is in your mind?"

"I am thinking of France."

He spoke at length of Brittany, of its curious intimate charm, of its grey skies and seas, of its twisted oaks, its legends: and the strange alluring effect of these upon himself when he was a boy at Concarneau. Hoyt nodded:

"Yes, yes. I can see you there. Lord! how I shall miss you: but if Brittany calls persistently—go! I came West in the same restless, hungry spirit. I chucked good prospects. Well, well, I have never looked back. I found, more or less, what I wanted, what suited me. I believe that, ultimately, you will do the same."

Tim's old friend, Mackinnon, presented tersely enough the general sense of the community—

"I think this is suicidal. You have established yourself

here. A big opportunity lurks round the corner. You propose to abandon substance for shadow. I suppose this is Hoyt's doing?"

"Oh, no!"

"I am much distressed. You have caught on. And now you talk to me of letting go! I have no patience with such nonsense."

The old man's persistence kept Tim awake throughout a couple of restless, miserable nights. He was tempted to decide his fate with a spin of the coin, but he did not do so. He struck, instead, a careful balance, setting down all assets and liabilities. Fetters of any sort would, he knew, consume him, eat into his very bones.

"I shall cut loose," he decided.

Finally he arranged with a local attorney to forward his only source of income, the one-tenth interest in Agua Caliente. He took leave of his friends with genuine regret, but a more poignant emotion was lacking. Feeling seemed to be dead within him, buried with Magdalena. His mind, for the moment, became obsessed by trifles which hitherto he had contemptuously disregarded. He was suffering from dyspepsia and insomnia. To win back health, to find somewhere—anywhere!—a renewed interest in life, the inclination for one honest laugh, for one stimulating, pleasurable sensation—these were worth while, everything else he dismissed as negligible.

He travelled from San Francisco to New York upon a pass which the cashier of the metropolitan bank obtained for him. He accepted also from the same friendly hands a substantial cheque, perhaps a thousandth part of the fortune which might have been his.

Alone upon the platform at Oakland, he watched his fellow-travellers taking leave of their friends. One happened to be the son of a millionaire, a polo-player and pleasure-seeker, whose cheery laugh lacerated poor Tim's nerves. He had seen this young fellow at the Arlington: and he feared that recognition impended. He would be in-

vited to join a jolly crowd. However, he had changed greatly: and he had only met this boisterous youth once. So he took his seat in the sleeper, and picked up a book. Presently, what he dreaded came to pass. The young fellow caught sight of Tim, whispered to a friend, and approached. From his expression it was reasonably certain that a doubt concerning Tim's identity was assailing him. He said tentatively:

"You are Mr. Brown? We met at Santa Barbara two years ago? You had a big business?"

Tim said quietly:

"You are mistaken. I have no business in Santa Barbara. My name is—White."

"I beg your pardon."

"Not at all."

Tim spoke in self-defence. He had not thought of abandoning Brown. But he smiled derisively, as he sat reflecting how pat the old name had become to his lips. Yet he wore black: he felt black: he was—Black.

BOOK FOUR: BLACK

BOOK FOUR: BLACK

CHAPTER I

REHABILITATIONS

I

MEANWHILE, war had broken out in South Africa. After leaving the steamer at Liverpool, Tim travelled direct to London, and tried to enlist in a cavalry regiment, offering himself to a spurred and dashing sergeant whom he met opposite St. Martin's Church. But, as might be expected, he failed to satisfy the Army doctors. His physique, when he stripped for inspection, provoked many questions. Nevertheless the verdict was unanimous:

"You are not fit for active service."

Dyspepsia and insomnia had taken flesh and muscle from his magnificent frame. He looked a wreck and felt—derelict.

Upon the evening of the day when he was inspected, he left England for France, travelling straight from Saint Malo to Concarneau. He could not face his many friends in Little Pennington; he was too miserably ill to meet Daffy. Brittany appealed irresistibly as a place wherein he had been happy as a boy, a place free from disagreeable associations, where he could do what he pleased without kind or unkind interference.

Twelve years had sped by since Tim's first visit to the ancient fishing port; and he marked changes in the town and in the people. The new and the old towns lie side by side, linked by a common causeway; and, may be, in

the hearts of the Concarnois new ideas and old lie thus, linked by a common interest, love and fear of the sea which puts food into their stomachs and exacts ruthless toll of their lives.

Tim beheld smug villas upon the once wild sand dunes to the north of the new town, and a miniature railroad which in summer-time brought many tourists. But for nine months in the year Concarneau remained much as he remembered it; a big village of fisherfolk and peasants with a sprinkling of artists who fled precipitately when their peace became imperilled by the ubiquitous tripper.

The railroad—he soon perceived—had affected the people in many subtle ways, bringing them into closer touch with a civilisation regarded blinkingly as destructive of cherished traditions and superstitions. The old simple faith in things unseen was crumbling away. The language and costume remained. Tim thought of the Bretons as children sadly watching an incoming tide which must sweep away their castles built of sand.

He became a pensionnaire in the Hôtel des Voyageurs, an old granite-built inn facing the quay and market-place, an inn much beloved of artists. He rented, also, a large garret in a house hard by which would serve as a sanctuary.

The mere sight of the sea made him feel better.

He watched the men and women at work, inhaling the strong fresh air blowing straight from the Atlantic; he talked to them, and they chattered back shyly at first, but afterwards frankly and joyously. His days became more tolerable; his nights remained bad. He lay awake, hour after hour, thinking of his wife, ravaged by futile rage and misery, cursing the traps and treacheries, the multiform ambiguities of life, and the final overwhelming mystery of death.

When he tried to work, he became strangely giddy. Twice he fainted, struggling back to consciousness against his will, wondering why some malignant fate ordained that he must live.

Ultimately, he abandoned all idea of writing till his health improved.

II

For a time he shunned the artists, who kindly let him alone, but gradually he became intimate with some of them. Cabral, the sculptor, was still the great man in Concarneau, but Cabral was away in Paris and not likely to return till March or April. Briand, the painter of grey skies and seas, lived in Paris with Cabral; they would return together—so the good landlady said.

There was an Englishman, a poet, with a dark melancholy face, who talked much with Tim, but always of abstractions. He, too, had suffered bludgeonings which absinthe helped him to forget. Another absintheur, named Vilard, a painter of much talent, exercised a certain attraction, because life had dealt unkindly with him. Vilard and Lasher, the poet, knew Gaugin, the Impressionist, who was ending his life in a tiny hamlet some five and twenty miles to the south of Concarneau. Add to these a burly, black-bearded Frenchman from the Midi, the antithesis of Vilard, and you have a first glimpse of Tim's companions and fellow-pensionnaires. The landlady spoke of the three as "mes anciens." They lunched and dined together, drank coffee together, met at the same hour for the evening apéritif, and talked everlastingly till it was time to go to bed. Art to each was not one-fourth of life, but, seemingly, all of it!

Vilard persuaded Tim to begin painting again. Vilard happened to be an admirable draughtsman and anatomist; and in his day had been massier of one of the big French ateliers. His sense of colour had slowly degenerated into nonsense under the sinister influence of Gauguin and absinthe, but his skill with charcoal remained. He took Tim in hand, accepting after much protest a small salary. The big fellow from the Midi, Jérôme Mercier, told Tim that he

ought to draw diligently for at least a year before he began to paint. Mercier affected the costume and the manners of a fisherman. He owned a boat in which he went sailing with Tim in all weathers, and he was reputed to be the strongest man in Concarneau. Morning and evening he exercised himself with huge dumbbells, and above his bed hung a small revolver, tied to the wall with blue riband. He shewed this to Tim, remarking solemnly:

"It is—loaded."

"For what?" Tim asked.

Mercier rolled his great brown eyes. Tim inferred that the pistol might be used against Mercier's enemies, if they raised against him a weapon which he abhorred—ridicule. This great, rough, blustering giant worked in pastel most delightfully, although Vilard spoke contemptuously of his work as—shik!

In February, Otis arrived from Paris, an American painter of marines, a tall, thin enthusiast to whom Tim took an instant and lasting affection. Otis knew California; as a young man he "taught school" in some obscure foothill town. For many years he had lived in France.

By this time Tim's health was mending, although any mental or imaginative work brought back the attacks of giddiness. He drew in the open, took long walks with Otis, and sailed with Mercier. None of these Bohemians asked questions. Probably they suffered from curiosity, but hid its ravages like Spartans and gentlemen. Traffic with the outside world concerned them not at all. They accepted calmly the presence of English troops in the Transvaal at a time when France was gnashing her teeth thereat.

Vilard said magnificently:

"Such talk, look you, smells of the footlights. Now I detest the theatre!"

Then he would continue, waving the pipe which was always being relighted: "For me, I abominate this bourgeois France, these swaggering fools of politicians seeking to line

their own nests at the expense of my country. I spit on them, canaille! I despise the crowd. Avec ma pipe et ma palette je suis content."

A little bonne happened to be passing the small marble-topped table at which Vilard and Tim were sitting. She smiled, knowingly, murmuring to Vilard:

"Avec votre petit verre d'absinthe aussi."

Vilard laughed, and ordered another.

Herbert Lasher read his poems to Tim. They were mostly concerned with dear dead women, thin wraiths of Lasher's imagination, fluttering wanly amongst poppies, with the odour of death about them. Lasher quoted Verlaine, whom he had met, with Bibi la Purée at the Café Harcourt in Paris. He was making a metrical translation of Baudelaire, which he hoped might appear in "The Yellow Book." The little man was singularly gentle, although, like Vilard, he would burst into passionate and withering condemnation of facile success achieved by commonplace talent. Both Vilard and he suffered from what Parisians call la nostalgie de la boue. Under the influence of absinthe they seemed to prefer the gutter to a four-post bed!

But they remained, drunk or sober, consistently kind to Tim, who, indeed, inspired a notable copy of verses to which "The Yellow Book" offered belated hospitality. Vilard, too, made an astounding portrait of our hero in black and white which hangs for all eyes to see in one of the Concarneau cafés.

Nobody, as yet, had identified the thin, haggard man of thirty with the merry boy of eighteen, except the barber near the hotel, a round-bodied, round-faced Breton, who would shave Tim for a couple of sous and then sprinkle his face with toilet vinegar, saying gaily:

"Ça pique, mais ça fait du bien."

He said at once: "I have seen Monsieur before, long ago."

"I came here for ten days when I was a boy."

"Ah, yes! One returns to the province. There is a charm. But it's passing. That accursed railroad!"

Then the little man would declaim superbly, à la Vilard, abusing jerry-builders and les gens de commerce and all and sundry who were tampering with ancient customs, tapping his chest and saying:

"I, too, am an artist and the friend of artists—what!"

"You are," Tim would reply soothingly.

"I am, Monsieur. They owe me money. I may not get paid, but I care nothing, nothing, you understand, nothing."

"I do understand," said Tim.

This, he decided, was part of the charm of a place which, admittedly, smelt abominably when the tide was out. The fishermen, the sardine girls, the peasants, exhibited, often quite unconsciously, a curious sympathy with artists. And the climate seemed to touch even the gerry-built villas with magical fingers, transmuting crude green and red and blue into delicate pink and grey and lavender.

Tim absorbed it all, as a man absorbs moisture when he is parched with thirst, as a field absorbs dew. The strong winds from the Atlantic, the soft land breezes, the cool grey skies, the wet sands, the ever-changing seas, the quiet landscape, wrought subtly with his tired tissues of mind and body.

III

Cabral and Briand arrived in April, when patches of red clover were beginning to encarmine the fields. Tim felt nervous about meeting the great men, but they had quite forgotten him. Cabral stared hard, but, as he explained afterwards, he was immensely struck by Tim's physical symmetry, and contemplating, at first sight, the possibility of persuading a stranger to pose. With this latent in his mind, he made himself vastly agreeable to Tim, and looked over his many studies, repeating: "Yes, yes, you have talent," with an air which suggested that much

more was necessary. He and Briand, however, were singularly free from the affectations of genius. Each met the younger man on equal terms, and rather gloried in it.

"I am a good comrade," said Cabral.

"That is perfectly true, mon vieux," Briand would reply.

Cabral took the head of the table at which the artists dined, and dominated all by a rough eloquence and rude vitality. He had peasant's blood in his veins, and a peasant's thrift. It was good to hear him exclaim: "Now, you will have a chopine with me," proffering the cider of the country (supplied free) as if it were a bottle of vin de cachet. Tim offered, in return, cigars, accepted as tributes to genius.

Briand worked in the open air, making endless studies of sky and sea, forever chasing the elusive curves of waves rippling over wet sands. Otis said that Briand had "cornered" this particular subject. He added:

"That's the game nowadays. One must go bald-headed for a trade-mark. Briand signs his pictures, but it's a waste of time. I'd like to steal some of his little tricks, but he won't let anyone except Cabral watch him at work. He cleans his palette every day. It's a fact. And locks up his colour-box. A very downy bird."

Something in Tim, some smouldering cinder—all that was left of Californian flames—made him scheme to find out Briand's tricks. He said, in the presence of Cabral:

"If I could see Monsieur Briand at work——?"

Briand replied hastily:

"Impossible."

"Pif-f-f!" exclaimed Cabral. "I shall make it my affair that you do. It's understood."

Briand protested, quite in vain, for Cabral's chaff was irresistible. But his vanity was flattered by Tim's insistence and enthusiasm. Ultimately, Tim became an unattached disciple. Briand acclaimed in him a sense of colour, and prepared a palette for his use. Tim, remembering Hoyt's injunction, played the sedulous ape. Indeed, so clever was

he in stealing Briand's methods that he actually deceived the clever Otis, showing the American a small study, which provoked the remark:

"Say—did old Briand make you a present of that?"

"It's mine."

"By Jove! So it is! Well, you'd better be careful! Copying is the devil. Yours? I'm a liar if it didn't take me in. But, no fooling, the old man touched it up for you?"

"Not a touch."

"I'm simply damned."

During the summer holidays, Otis and Tim and Vilard retired to a small hamlet beyond the ken of tourists. They returned to Concarneau in October. Cabral, after a searching survey of Tim, said brusquely:

"Now, I am ready for you. You look fine, my boy. Yes; I propose to immortalise you as a Discus Thrower. You have the body and the head. The head above all! I have been searching Paris for that. You see, my friend, I want the expression, the look of the athlete who is striving to do something beyond his powers. A tense look, an anxious, eager look. You have that. But it is going. Soon you will lose it. Shall I call it the last look of youth? When can you pose for me?"

"Name of a name!" exclaimed Tim.

"What? You refuse? And I have done you favours. I have been a comrade—I——"

Tim cut him short.

"I'll pose, cher maître."

Cabral embraced him on both cheeks.

IV

The results of this posing had far-reaching effects, which will be set forth when the time comes. For the moment it brought Tim into intimate contact with a man of charac-

ter and influence. Cabral could no more help imposing his views upon others than the sun can withhold light and heat. Rodin and he stood for primitive, elemental forces, which they expressed in clay and marble. They developed in others that thrusting power which impels men to do anything rather than stand still. Vilard and Lasher were dreamers, and in his heart Tim was aware of this. He had sunk to a low level through sheer ill health when he met these degenerates, and their philosophy—so far as it went—exercised no evil effect, because he needed complete rest after years of strenuous endeavour. He might have cast himself with them at the feet of la reine verte, and probably would have done so, thereby ruining his health, had not that health become to him the object of his solicitude. Vilard and Lasher, poor devils! had never known the robustious joy of perfect health. The memory of that, and all it included, sustained Tim in hours of deep dejection. The doctor whom he consulted shortly after he reached Concarneau told him that he was sound organically, and, when prescribing a rigorous diet, particularly warned his patient against alcohol as a stimulant to jaded and sensitive nerves. He said almost brutally:

"It means suicide, Monsieur."

Cabral became excited when he saw his model stripped, running his short spatulate fingers over Tim's muscles, and taking accurate measures, which he noted down upon an anthropometric chart. Tim's interest in these proceedings quickened, when Cabral said:

"You are perfectly proportioned. I have never had such a model, but, all the same, look you, your muscles can be further developed. Talk to Mercier! Exercise with him! I insist. I see in you my masterpiece. You will not refuse to help me?"

Tim made a grimace, but he said with a faint stirring of vanity:

"If you could have seen me five years ago——!"

Cabral swooped upon this.

"Good! What has been, may be again at your age. I shall begin with the head, but the body is not quite worthy of me. You must add inches to the pectorals, the triceps, the abdominal muscles and the thighs and calf. An all-round development—what? Mercier is our man."

"Why not get Mercier for the body?"

"Hercules never appealed to me. These big, over-muscled men are lazy. I want the speed and symmetry of an Apollo. You will do what I ask? On my knees I ask it."

Fired by this Gallic enthusiasm, Tim went to Mercier, and presented himself as a pupil. Mercier insisted upon an exhaustive examination, and became nearly as enthusiastic as Cabral. He added majestically:

"For the rest—if the Master commands, it is for us to obey. I shall feel honoured in carrying out his orders. With you, my son, I can perform miracles."

Accordingly Tim submitted to the daily discipline of clubs and dumbbells under the tutelage of an expert who understood exactly what was needed.

The result surprised nobody more than Tim himself. Sleep came back to him, and an immense appetite. Cabral rubbed his hands, chuckling as he recorded the increased measurements.

"Ca va bien! Continuez!"

Tim had to encounter volleys of chaff at the dinner table and in the cafés, but he was cheered on by the women.

"Monsieur s'embellit énormément," was the flattering verdict of his landlady and the bevy of hand-maidens.

In fine, as before, youth and health and strength came back to him. His body below the throat shone like white satin. But the mind remained black.

Cabral, however, having finished Tim's head to his satisfaction, or rather as approximately to his satisfaction as any genius can attain, said curtly:

"I have the look I wanted. In return I must take that look from your face, for it indicates an uneasy mind, my friend. It is impossible to deceive me. You are suffering.

I ask myself—why? You are still a young man. Yet I perceive that you look back instead of ahead. That is rank blasphemy."

Bit by bit Cabral's sympathy extracted details.

"Yes, yes, all is explained, but life remains. You have work to do. Good! Do it."

Tim nodded, not very hopefully. He had reached the "sticking" stage. Also, he was well aware that painting exacted a long and patient apprenticeship. Otis told him cheerfully that three years at the Beaux Arts would give him the necessary technique. Three years, the irreducible minimum! It seemed an eternity. Should he abandon painting and turn finally to writing?

The nerve force to make a decision so vital was still lacking. He temporised, which, perhaps, was wise. And he remembered the Vicar's words:

"Sooner or later you will find out what you can do, and then you will do it."

Cabral finished *The Discus Thrower* and returned with Briand to Paris.

A year had passed.

V

The Discus Thrower, exhibited at the May *Salon,* added lustre to Cabral's reputation. Incidentally its success as the statue of the year lured Tim to Paris, where he passed a somewhat riotous month. Pleasure beckoned to him with a beguilement only to be measured by those who have drunk to the dregs the cup of Pain. In Paris, at a small hotel, he met two Englishmen of his own age, public-school men, who had remained in the conventional groove. Their prejudices, their absorption in games and sport, their contempt for "outsiders," their utter lack of any sense of proportion amazed Tim. He had not the smallest notion, till then, of how far he had travelled from them. They were "doing" Paris, with an uneasy conviction that Paris was

"doing" them. And yet they appealed to Tim enormously, because they looked so clean, so well-groomed, and were, on their own ground, such artlessly good fellows. They reminded him of Jocelyn and Wynne. Time seemed to stand still for men of that type. They remained eternally young and almost childish, particularly when they affected the wisdom to which in the nature of things they could never attain. Brief intimacy with them justified Tim in keeping away from Little Pennington. His absence from the happy village lay upon his conscience, but he left it there with a lighter heart after meeting these compatriots, because he learned from them something of vital importance, which brought back vividly that last terrible scene between the Vicar and himself.

They had been talking politics. Tim's new acquaintances were Unionists and presumably Churchmen, although their behaviour in Paris did not warrant the latter assumption. Tim listened, rather bored, to opinions culled, for the most part, from the Tory press, and then, with an unexpectedness which made his heart throb, one young man remarked:

"My governor says that if Carteret had not been drowned we should have had a Tory Democracy with Carteret himself as Prime Minister. He was certainly our most brilliant man at the time. And it's a humiliating fact that we've no one like him."

"Who was Carteret?" asked Tim.

He guessed that they were speaking of his father. Of that father, as we know, he knew nothing except that he had been a brilliant politician who went down in his yacht in Dublin Bay. Tim left the matter at that, not even seeking to find out his father's name, although curious in regard to what it was. Such information is not to be picked up in the foc'sle of a sailing ship. By the time Tim reached San Francisco, where such curiosity might have been satisfied, he decided that he hated his father, because he had brought such terrible trouble to his mother. And then, after reading the Vicar's letter, he accepted finally his guardian

as sire, casting the other to the limbo of forgetfulness. The Vicar was—as he had pointed out—Tim's legal father. The other lay dead beneath the sea. Let him remain there!

And now, suddenly, he had risen from the dead, and stood facing his son, a pale ghost.

"Who was Carteret?" repeated the young man. "By Jove! White, you must have forgotten your English history."

"I have," said Tim. He could remember Carteret's name, nothing more. "Tell me what you know."

"That isn't much," said the other modestly.

"Carteret was a cousin of sorts to the present duke. He had the ability and the unscrupulousness of the family. He began his political life as a Radical, but came over to us. Just before his death he started a party of his own."

"When did he die?" asked Tim, wishing to make sure.

"Some time in the sixties. Before I was born. Went down in Dublin Bay. There's a nailing good life of him. 'Rupert Carteret and His Times.'"

"Thank you," said Tim.

CHAPTER II

POT-BOILING

I

AT Galignani's Tim bought his father's biography and carried it back to the hotel to read, devouring it at one sitting, turning the last page long after midnight. Sleep was impossible, so he wandered into the streets till he came to the Place de la Concorde, where he sat down upon a bench, giving himself up to thoughts racing through his brain. Never since the death of Magdalena had he felt so alive, so tingling with the craving to be and to do which he recognised as an inheritance—all in fact that a father of like temperament had bequeathed to an unknown son.

The biography of Rupert Carteret had been admirably done by a kinsman who knew him well, an intimate friend and yet a sagacious critic. In fine, Tim beheld his father for the first time as portrayed by a master hand; he knew that the picture must be true to life, for life informed it. There were several illustrations; Carteret as child, as boy, as youth, as man. In each Tim recognised himself. He resembled his father rather than his mother. L'enfant de l'amour resemble toujours au père!

His father——!

Why had he been so incredibly foolish as to keep knowledge of such a sire at bay? Heavens! Here was a document by which he could interpret himself. The father lived again in his son. He, too, had suffered abominably, linked for many years to an insane wife, whom he had married for love. He had seen the mind of his beloved die by inches, while the body changed also from a thing of

beauty into something worse than death. He had lost a fair fortune and made another. He had been desperately ill, and had regained his health. He had tried half a dozen avenues to Fame before he found the one leading to Westminster. He had distinguished himself at Oxford, at the Bar, as a writer, as an amateur actor. For the first half of the book, it seemed to Tim that he was reading about himself, of successive phases through which he had passed, although Rupert Carteret had been always in and of the great world. One phrase was illuminating—

"Behold a chameleon!"

And again—

"Like so many cadets of his illustrious family—a rebel."

Yes; he had set even ducal authority at defiance, allying himself with Bright and Cobden, espousing the cause of Labour, and then turning again, towards the last, to the Tories, inciting them in vain to justify their position and opportunities as protectors of the poor. Admittedly Rupert Carteret had struggled desperately in his own interests, fired by an ambition half-noble, half-ignoble, seeking to impose his personality upon all with whom he came in contact, unscrupulous politically, not too scrupulous morally, for after his wife's incarceration in a private asylum he seemed to have had endless affairs with other women; and yet, from first to last, a light—now flickering faintly, now burning with steady beam—shone about him, a divine spark of sympathy in and for others, which revealed the man's essential humanity and greatness.

Of Tim's mother not a word.

The absence of any mention of her touched Tim profoundly. He could not doubt that this secret love had been guarded jealously, hidden even from the keen eyes of Carteret's Boswell. And he could understand the tremendous attraction which such a man, so charming, so versatile, so impulsive and enthusiastic, must have exercised over a lovely Irish woman, young and ardent, a prisoner in the house of an evil liver and spendthrift. He

could understand how inevitable had been her fall, and how sweet her surrender to such a conqueror.

Every hard thought—and there were many—which he had entertained concerning this hapless pair was melted by pity and sympathy. His tears fell drenchingly upon their misfortunes. He forgot his own.

II

He returned to Concarneau to attack his art with a zest and determination which excited derisive comments in Lasher and Vilard and high commendation from Otis. Cabral remained in Paris. Briand and he came back to Brittany in October. Cabral was immensely struck by the progress made. Tim had essayed portraiture; his studies of the sardinères were excellent from the point of view of likeness; but Cabral grumbled at too facile modelling and brush-work. Briand turned from them impatiently. He loathed dirt and ignorance.

"La bête humaine!" he said scornfully. "Je ne cherche pas ca."

And then Cabral would reply furiously:

"C'est un vrai malheur pour toi, vieux imbécile!"

That was the unbridgable difference between the two men, which, possibly, inasmuch as each was artist to his finger-tips, accounted for their comradeship. The work of both ran upon parallel lines, there was no possibility of rivalry or comparison. To Cabral nothing mattered except men and women and children; Briand sought and found his inspiration upon unfrequented stretches of gleaming sands, reflecting tenderly soft little clouds with edges of foaming light.

However, Briand said seriously:

"You have talent; and you see beneath the surface."

Otis, too, admitted originality in Tim's backgrounds. He used vivid colour daringly, in defiance of academic

standards. Otis had been a pupil of Bonnard and also of Bougereau; he had worked much at Barbizon, treading in the steps of Jean François Millet and Bastien Lepage. But he had abandoned ugly peasants and beautiful nymphs for seascape, which he was beginning to handle masterfully upon lines exactly opposite to Briand's, after the manner of Stanhope Forbes. But at the back of his mind remained the old conventions. Backgrounds, he contended, should be merely indicated. Velasquez understood that! Why try to improve upon him?

"Colour is my fancy," said Tim.

"Well, I can't deny that you are grappling with the modern principle. Hit 'em in the eye. That's what the blooming public demands."

"Why not? I've been hit in the eye myself."

During these years, Tim lived upon the one-tenth interest from Agua Caliente which was remitted from Santa Barbara every six months. What he had saved out of this remittance was spent during his riotous month in Paris. The attorney, who attended to this affair, wrote hopefully of a renewed prosperity in the Golden State, with a sub-acid flavour of regret and disgust because Tim had "let go" too soon. He announced the discovery of oil, and the intention of the Agua Caliente Syndicate to begin boring upon a large scale. He concluded: "Oil may make you a rich man yet."

Tim was much elated, but premature thanksgiving oozed out of him when his Christmas dividend arrived at Concarneau—split exactly in half. His attorney recited the facts, which were cold indeed. The syndicate had sunk two deep wells without finding the lubricating fluid. Tim was entitled to one-tenth of the net profits; and the profits for the year had been subject to this damnable drain.

"I must try to sell some stuff," said Tim to Otis. "If they go on boring, which they talk of doing, there may be no profits at all."

"Quite," replied Otis. "This will buck you up, Tim. I

never knew a remittance man who was not more or less the worse for being dependent on it."

"It has saved me."

"Up to a point. But there's nothing like getting into the open market."

Tim looked at him doubtfully.

"Have I the cheek to sell portraits?"

"That's exactly what you have, old man. The cheek to sell 'em is a bigger asset than the ability to paint 'em. I'll find you customers."

"Right!"

III

The humiliating sense that he was a remittance man produced a healthy inflammation. He perceived that his friends regarded him as an amateur, burdened by this remittance, above or below the necessity of straining every nerve to save himself from starvation. And behind this lay the grim determination to keep away from the Vicar and Little Pennington till he could go back in mild triumph, a successful man. He wanted to say to his guardian:

"What you did for me has not been wasted. I have made good. I am something more than a servant of the India Civil Service."

Rupert Carteret had returned to a ducal establishment in much the same spirit, extorting a belated welcome from the head of his family and a triumphal arch across the main drive to the castle.

And there was Daffy.

He longed to meet Daffy again. They corresponded at rare intervals. Necessarily she spoke of her husband, now a pillar of the House of Lords, and an M.F.H. Daffy had wanted to marry an M.F.H. To invite contrast between a county magnate and an impecunious painter was unthinkable to Rupert Carteret's son.

You will understand, therefore, how easily our hero fell

into the trap which Fate laid for him. Love of his work became merged in the ambition to "make good," the same ambition which had constrained him to devote all energies to the sale of land.

He believed that he was himself again, that he had found his Ego, that he knew exactly what he wanted, fortune and fame. He put fame before fortune. Let Timothy White ring in the mouths of men. Cabral said to him:

"Mon enfant, thou art rejuvenated. It is very good!"

It was true. The black humours passed. The irony of the change amused and perplexed Tim. He fell to wondering about the immeasurable possibilities latent in Man, his adaptability, his powers of recuperation. That, he decided, was the true significance of the New Testament. Christ must remain for all time the Supreme Type of humanity, the Universal Exemplar. Of what trivial consequence remained the harmony or the discrepancy of the gospel narratives. The great illuminating fact, whether you accepted it symbolically or literally, was the victory of life over death, the resurrection of the dead.

IV

Between Christmas and Midsummer's Day, Tim painted two or three portraits which he sold at a price which his clients swore faithfully not to reveal, and which they communicated at once to their friends. This success—for so Otis regarded it—came opportunely, for the half yearly dividend failed altogether in June, and Tim's agent informed him that the syndicate had staked their profits on striking oil, and had not struck it.

Tim, he added, must not expect any money from Agua Caliente unless the property were sold. It was very valuable, worth nearly half a million dollars, quite exclusive of the oil rights, and sooner or later the syndicate would find a purchaser. It was being offered for sale.

Tim accepted this in the true Bohemian spirit, giving a small, select supper to celebrate his emancipation.

"I am now on my own," he stated.

"Root, hog, or die!" quoted Otis.

Lasher and Vilard took a less rosy view. The habit of impetrating small loans had become chronic. Perhaps Tim was sorrier for them than for himself. He said to Vilard:

"We must economise."

"All true artists," replied that great man bitterly, "should be supported by the State."

Lasher agreed with him.

When the time came for fleeing from the trippers, Tim talked of Rochefort en Terre, where there was a delightful inn up in the hills, kept by two charming sisters. Otis, however, protested vehemently:

"Are you mad, Tim? You must stay in Concarneau and paint the haute bourgeoisie."

"Never!"

"I'll stay with you. We'll bleed 'em white. And look here, a mighty rich little widow is coming, a cousin of mine, Mrs. Boal. Ever heard of Boal's Axle Grease?"

"The brand sounds familiar."

"I'll bet it greased your wheels in California. And it must grease 'em again here. I shall make her commission a full length. You see!"

After much argument, Otis prevailed. The others scoffed. Even Cabral said:

"Ca pue le commerce!"

Tim and Otis laughed with the scoffers, regarding the whole affair as a joke to be perpetrated by two martyrs at the expense of Philistines. Their landlady was delighted. She stated her views with perspicacity:

"People come here and ask, 'Where, Madame, are your dear artists?' and then I reply, 'They must have their little holiday, too'; but it is stupid to leave the town when the fools come, who know nothing of pictures. Always

that has enraged me. Now—God be praised!—I shall be able to help sell your machines, and you, my dear children, will not grudge me a small commission—what?"

"Ten per cent.," said Otis, rubbing his hands.

The landlady, a Bretonne bretonnante, kissed them on both cheeks, adding complacently:

"We must use tact—hein? Never, but never, my children, must you speak of your pictures. That will be my affair. After dinner, when I bring the old cognac, I shall say: 'It is a pity that you cannot see the masterpieces of Monsieur Otis and Monsieur White. Ah! what talent, what genius is there!' And then they will be furious. And to calm them I shall promise to do my little possible. I shall make the arrangements, what? With a difficulty——! As a supreme favour to me. Ah! la bonne farce! C'est de la comédie, ça!"

Then Mercier thumped his enormous chest, and declared his intention of joining the martyrs. Tim was delighted; he had learned to love the black-a-vized giant. Otis said dejectedly: "Le Colosse will spoil our market. His chocolate-boxey pastels will sell like hot cakes."

Vilard cheered up Lasher by whispering:

"When we return, cher poète, there will be pickings. What a blessed privilege to be able to assist genius!"

Mercier said loudly, with the intention of appeasing Cabral:

"These good bourgeois have pretty wives. We must be civil to them. Yes, yes; it is strange that we never thought of this campaign before." He continued talking of his bonnes fortunes while Tim chalked on his broad back:

"Dangerous."

V

About the middle of July, the tourists invaded Concarneau, a terrible crowd. The three martyrs were appalled. Even Mercier quailed, saying querulously:

"I never saw such women. It is a penance to behold them in bathing costume."

With the crowd came Mrs. Boal. She was a little, faded woman with kind, anxious eyes which rested pleasantly upon Tim. Her chin and nose, faintly encarmined, were rather sharp. She suffered from dyspepsia and had passed her thirty-fourth birthday. Her Christian name was Alethea. Tim was much relieved, because he had expected an over-dressed, bediamonded parvenu from the mid-west, a type that he had met and abominated in Santa Barbara. Mrs. Boal joined the martyrs at a small round table, saying little and eating less, but obviously impressed by the artists. Otis furnished Tim with additional details—

"Gideon T. Boal was a beast, a big money-making brute. He used to ask me why I didn't come back to God's country. I told him that I intended to return there when sixty millions of my compatriots had visited Europe to learn manners. There was a coolness between us after that. I used to wonder why Omnipotence permitted him to accumulate his vast pile. Not a soul was the better for it while he lived; and his death emphasised the eternal fitness of things. Alethea has all his cash, and doesn't know what to do with it, poor dear. Now, Tim, I've fixed you up. You're to paint her full length, and I've named the price. Five thousand francs. Hit the trail, my son."

"Otis, it's too much."

"It isn't. If I'd asked less, she would have been scared. And she's taken an uncommon fancy to you, Tim. She saw Cabral's Discobulus in Paris. And I believe she'd have bought it, only some hog-slaying magnate from Chicago snapped it up."

"I'll do my best," said Tim.

CHAPTER III

ALETHEA

I

MR. BOAL," observed Alethea to Tim, "considered me a fool."

She stood upon the dais in Tim's studio, with the light from the north window slanting upon her face. She wore a frock, created by Pingat for the portrait, a soft, shimmering brocade, exquisitely cut upon simple, flowing lines. Tim admired the frock enormously, and had said so in his usual hearty manner, which established friendship upon an easy footing. He liked Alethea, and felt sorry for her. Obviously, she had borne much from her late husband, everything, in point of fact, except children. Otis was thankful for this, and possibly Alethea joined in silent thanksgiving. When a woman tells a man that another man has accounted her a fool, it is not easy to reply. Tim, however, murmured politely:

"It doesn't much matter now what Mr. Boal thought, does it?"

"N-n-no," replied Alethea. She gazed wistfully at Tim, hoping that he would be complimentary, but our hero frowned, trying to seize the fugitive expression.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "I've got it?"

"What?"

"That little look. It has escaped me till now. What a bit of luck!"

"May I take a tiny peep?"

She descended from the dais and approached the portrait now nearing completion. As a work of art it was sub-

jected later to much well-deserved and drastic criticism, but the likeness was undeniable—and flattering. Otis had bargained that it should be flattering. He said earnestly to Tim:

"The poor little woman has been biffed with a fence-rail. You must play the good Samaritan. Make her pleased with herself."

Tim had succeeded beyond expectation.

Alethea peeped; then she said shyly:

"Do I look as young as that?"

"You look younger every day."

"Do I? Well, I don't feel young. Nobody feels young who takes Lacto-Peptine. I take fifteen grains; ten used to be enough, but I had to increase the dose."

"Oblige me by going back to ten."

"Really? I suppose you're joking."

"Try ten."

"Fried sardines are so indigestible, Mr. White."

"But they're delicious. I'm sure you think too much and too seriously about yourself."

"I have to," she admitted naïvely.

Tim inferred from her tone all that she intended him to infer. The look which he had just caught indicated a sense of loneliness, and the incapacity to get away from it.

"I sha'n't touch that canvas again to-day. Do you want to go back to the hotel, or do you feel like sitting here with me and having a talk?"

She smiled primly and sat down.

"What shall we talk about?" asked Tim briskly. "Present or future?"

"The present, please."

"Good! Do you think you're making the most of it? Oughtn't you to be sitting to Carolus Duran, for example, instead of to me?"

"I have liked sitting to you. I should be terrified of those big, conceited men. I hated to sit to you at first."

"You have sat like Patience on a monument."

"It has been so pleasant," she sighed. "I shall be so sorry to leave Concarneau."

"Aren't you wandering into the future?"

She nodded, and remained silent, watching Tim as he began to clean his brushes. Whenever he happened to turn his back, her face softened, growing prim again when he looked at her. In her heart she was piqued because Tim remained so genially aloof. Many men had made love to his widow since the death of Gideon T. Boal. A select few refrained. She hated the many and liked the few, which shows that she was not the fool which her late husband had considered her. Now, after a month's intimate acquaintance, she began to wonder if she would like Tim to make love to her. From Otis she learned something of Tim's past. Otis said tersely:

"Poor Tim has had some nasty knocks. He lost his wife, his money and his health in one rattle out of the box. He looked half dead when he came here."

"He looks splendid now, Tom."

"That's because his work has got hold of him. Nothing like work. I predict that Tim will become a fashionable portrait painter. He has a little way with him. You'll find out."

She had. Tim's little way challenged attention from most women. Alethea said at the end of the first week to her cousin:

"You know, Tom, your friend, Mr. White, reminds me of that sign at the end of the sand dunes."

"What sign?"

She laughed softly:

"Défence de chasser sur ce terrain!"

Otis laughed.

"Great Scot! Alethea, you *were* wasted on Gideon. May I repeat that to Tim?"

"If you do, I'll never speak to you again."

Otis told Tim the same evening, adding:

"The Discobulus did the trick. There's a big heap of dollars, old man, why not sail in?"

"You go to blazes!" replied Tim irritably.

When he had finished cleaning his brushes, Tim sat down not too near Mrs. Boal.

"We seem to have exhausted the present rather quickly. After all, the future appeals more to the imagination. What are you going to do when you leave here?"

"I don't know. That's the trouble with me. Probably I shall go back to my apartment in Paris."

"You like Paris?"

"Not particularly. It's an improvement upon Minneapolis. I have been asked to two places in Scotland."

"Scotland! Do you shoot, or play golf?"

"I don't do anything of that sort. I'm a looker-on."

"At other people's games. Why not start some of your own?"

She regarded him intently, and then gazed reflectively at her hands, which were small and soft and white, the hands of a looker-on. After a pause she said simply:

"I don't know how to begin games."

Tim displayed impatience.

"But, dash it all! you have money to burn. Why not burn some of it."

"How?"

"You are interested in the theatre. Produce a play! Get hold of a budding genius! Make things buzz a bit!"

"I don't know any budding geniuses. If you had written a play, Mr. White, I would produce it—with pleasure."

"Thanks," said Tim. "I really believe you would."

"I'd love to help people, but——"

"You hate 'em when they try to help themselves out of Mr. Boal's pile. Of course, you're pestered by the wrong sort."

"Yes; I am. It is hateful. I was reading the other day about the lady whom Lord Beaconsfield married. She

helped him, didn't she? That must have been a real joy to her."

"Advertise for a rising but impecunious politician. The House is full of them."

"You laugh at nearly everything I say. I don't know any politicians. I was not impressed by them in America."

"Nor I. Anyway, I detest party politics. If you really want to help people——"

He paused, looking at her, faintly smiling.

"I do. Indeed, I do."

"Then you need not leave Concarneau. The sardines have failed this summer. There will be a lot of misery in the fall and winter. Children and women will starve."

"Of course, I will help. Why didn't you mention this before?"

"I wondered whether you would find it out for yourself. But how could you? These Bretons are naturally reserved, and the fisherfolk are extraordinarily proud and plucky. Already there is a lot of hardship. And in bad times the men drink. It used to be cider; now it's bad brandy, la goutte." He went on, speaking with feeling and excitement, in a tone she had never heard from him before: "Life is a damnable affair when you have to face it with an empty stomach."

"Have you ever done that?"

"Yes; I have."

"Oh! Tell me, please! I am so interested."

"I've been down on my uppers, Mrs. Boal. I've begged a crust of bread and a plate full of cold potatoes. You see I know how these poor devils suffer. Yes; I've been there, but I escaped one misery—cold."

She shivered; her face became forlorn.

"I don't want to make you feel cold," Tim murmured.

"You have warmed me. I will help these poor women gladly, if you will show me the way."

"Come on," said Tim.

II

She followed him into many houses during the next week, watching him intently, beholding a side of the man quite unfamiliar to her. Talking with his poorer friends, Tim dropped a slightly ironic, reckless tone. With them he became of them, simple, ingenuous, very plain-spoken when he encountered whining fraud. The Breton is a singular mixture of simplicity and shrewdness. Recognise him as a Celt, not a Frenchman, and you begin to understand him. Alethea tasted the fish soup, la cotrillade, and listened to some of Botrel's songs crooned by mothers to their children. Tim was saturated with the traditions of Finistère. The quaint customs, the legends, the superstitions flowed from his lips. Such knowledge was new to Alethea, and stimulated an imagination somewhat atrophied by disuse. Tim whirled her out of herself centrifugally. He made her giddy. She became intensely conscious of him and dependent upon him for excitement which seemed to exercise a pleasingly rejuvenating effect. He filled her prim mind with curiosities concerning his past life, which he persistently and exasperatingly refused to gratify, whetting them to a sharper edge. In one of the small, granite-built cottages a little boy was slowly dying of arthritis. Tim's rage at this confounded Alethea, who had been brought up a Presbyterian of the straightest sect, knowing the Westminster Confession by heart. The child happened to be illegitimate. Alethea was very sorry for him, but rooted in her mind lay the conviction that the deformed hands and feet were God's judgment upon a child of sin. Tim's wrath confounded her:

"He has never had a chance. It's too horrible. There's an old woman next door dying of cancer, but she's had her innings; she's lived. This poor little kid has had nothing but pain. It makes my gorge rise."

Alethea murmured shyly:

"The way of the transgressor is hard."

"What do you mean?"

She blushed.

"He was—er—born out of wedlock."

"Heavens! Do you hold the child responsible for that? Do you think that illegitimate children are a whit worse than any others?"

"I don't know," she faltered. "The sins of the fathers——"

"Nothing in that at all," said Tim vehemently. "Rather the contrary. Love children, as a rule, are stronger and better looking than the lawful pledges. And a jolly good thing, too. The Doctrine of Compensation comes in."

Alethea pursed up her pale-pink lips, but she was thinking that Tim looked extraordinarily handsome when he was excited.

"Would you think less of me if I were illegitimate?"

"Of course not, but you aren't."

Tim burst out laughing.

III

Jérôme Mercier made love to Alethea, but his methods reminded Alethea of the late Gideon T. Boal, who said brutally that if he wanted a soft thing he asked for it, and generally got it. One afternoon Otis, Mercier, Tim and Alethea were drinking coffee upon the terrasse in front of the hotel. It was market day, and most of the peasants, men and women, were cidralisés. Upon the quay, not forty yards distant, an altercation arose between a peasant and his wife, ending in a vicious blow from the man's clenched fist. The couple were separated, but Mercier, much to Tim's amusement, gobbled an opportunity of impressing the rich widow. He had spent a fortnight in England, and liked to air his English.

"What a 'orror!" he growled to Alethea. "He strike his wife wiz hees feest, *so!*"

Mercier crashed a huge fist into the open palm of his left hand. Alethea winced, Mercier went on dramatically:

"Do you think that I, Jérôme Mercier, would strike my wife wiz my feest?"

"No, no," said Alethea, thinking that the fortnight spent by the fiery Gaul in England had not been altogether wasted. "Of course not."

Mercier went on, delighted to observe that Alethea's eyes were fixed upon his bulging muscles:

"Eef I was married, hein? And eef my wife should say somesing to me zat I did not like, do you think that I would use my feest?"

"What would you do?" enquired Tim.

"Sapristi! I should give 'er a good keeck—be'ind."

Later, Alethea said to Tim:

"I don't like Monsieur Mercier."

By this time our hero was uncomfortably aware that Alethea liked somebody else whom he was too modest to name. Otis said with conviction:

"She's heels over head, Tim. And not a bad little sort. The clinging ivy, what? And you, the sturdy oak!"

"Don't be a fool!"

"That is my constant endeavour. It's a cinch, old man. If you don't mind ladling out Lacto-Peptine, three times a day, till death do you part, why mop up what the gods are handing to you in a spoon."

"Shut up!"

"It's there to take or leave. You'll be a sucker if you don't open your mouth wide."

"I say—drop it!"

Otis shrugged his shoulders. In his heart the good fellow was more concerned with his cousin's happiness than Tim's. He felt sure that Tim would make an admirable husband.

Some Frenchman has said: "A man chooses his friends, but love imposes itself." Perhaps the exact contrary may be affirmed of American women. Friendship is imposed

upon them, but they choose their mates. Alethea made up her mind that she wanted Tim, and set to work to capture him. She employed ordinary methods, throwing herself whole-heartedly into the manufacture of nets.

There are three rules which might appropriately be framed and hung up in young ladies' seminaries:

(1) Inspire a passion.

(2) Let it be discreetly seen that passion has been inspired in you, for most men are terrified of marrying a cold woman.

(3) Sink, temporarily, your own identity, tastes, and predilections in those of your quarry.

If these rules be observed, the result is certain.

Alethea, let it be premised, spread her nets at the right moment. Tim was approaching another crisis in his variegated life. With a return of health and exuberant vitality, he had grown restless, dissatisfied with himself and his present ambitions. The portrait of Alethea stood out as a commercial success and an artistic failure. That was the unspoken verdict of every man who knew. Nobody knew it better than Tim himself. He could become, if he chose, a painter of fair women; and, with constant practice, his technique would improve. Such portraits, if he struggled towards such an end, would be hung in the Salon and on the walls of the Royal Academy. A comfortable income, so Otis predicted, was assured.

"You have the knack," said Otis.

A success so facile bored Tim. He possessed a talent——! That, invariably, was Cabral's word. An eternity of portrait painting, of tactful concessions to pretty clients, of jejune small-talk, appeared to Tim about as alluring as the future of sweet Hosannas promised to the faithful of Little Pennington. To paint a great landscape was another matter. That, indeed, would be worth while. But Briand was doubtful whether such a consummation could ever be reached.

And meanwhile he must live, pay his way, root vigor-

ously, or sink into abysmal zones of degeneration like Vilard and poor Lasher.

Happily, he was able to pay his way. The haute bourgeoisie had bought many studies. Mercier and Otis were talking of a three-man show at Nantes and Brest. If Tim chose to take up writing again, he had money enough to support himself in tolerable comfort for at least a year.

CHAPTER IV

ACCORDING TO LASHER

I

CABRAL returned to Concarneau upon the 15th of September, and nodded portentously when he saw Alethea's portrait. He told Tim that the price paid (Tim showed him the cheque) was not excessive. Then he added:

"Tu as trouvé ton chemin, mon enfant."

But he smiled derisively, shrugging his broad shoulders. Tim said:

"Mon maître, will you be perfectly honest with me?"

Cabral's thick eyebrows went up. Tim continued:

"Shall I arrive?"

"But where?"

"I am ambitious. It is not enough to paint portraits for the haute bourgeoisie. Of all men you are the one whose opinion I hold to be final. Is it in me, do you think, to paint a great picture?"

Cabral hesitated. When he spoke his voice had deepened in tone; he pulled at his beard, staring keenly into Tim's eager eyes.

"I do not know, my friend. It means—work, work, work. Ah! God! how I have worked! And ever since I was fifteen. And now I am fifty. What a life! Everything sacrificed to my Art. Well, I don't complain. For the rest, you think, they all think, that I have arrived. But, alas! I never satisfy myself. And then I wonder if it is good enough. I might have married. There was a dear girl once——! But my work came between us. She has been

happier with another man. Voilà! You ask for my opinion, and here it is. I do not think that your soul is in your painting. It is not everything to you. And you began too late. You have reached a point——! You can support yourself. It is no small achievement, but a great picture——! Ah! that will exact sacrifice. It means a road other than the one you have taken, a narrow up-hill path; it means infinite patience, infinite pains, and at the end, perhaps, nothing but disappointment."

"Thank you," said Tim. "You have done me a service."

That night he reread his novel with a detachment which surprised him. He experienced a craving to finish it. He compared the work of his brain with the work of his hands. And the one, so he decided, was honestly a part of himself, whereas the other seemed patch-work, odds and ends filched from Otis, from Briand, from Mercier. He faced the demoralising truth: his painting was fake!

Next day he said to Otis:

"I suppose I'm a faker."

"So am I," said Otis. "I steal everything I can. We are all of us fakers, except Cabral, Briand and Lasher."

"Lasher?"

"Lasher, poor devil! is sincere. His output is small, but such as it is I call it original stuff. It's Lasher. Nobody else could do it. That's the test. He has no market; and he's a slacker; but he is himself."

"You are right."

"You look solemn, old man."

"I am thinking of chucking painting."

"You're quite crazy."

"I have been crazy."

II

Fate furthered Alethea's designs. The Vicar wrote to Tim telling him, with infinite regret, that the Pennington estates were in the market. Tim had always known that

Sir Gilbert's successor was cruelly crippled, that the possibility of such a sale impended above him. And, in California, when money was pouring into his pockets, he had thought that he would like to "make good" by buying such a property. What a triumph that would have been. He remembered prattling about it to Magdalena at the time when Cooke and he bought the three immense tracts to the south of Santa Barbara.

He said to Alethea:

"If you want a superb estate in perfect order, with a historical house on it, and inviolate traditions, now's your chance."

He was jesting, but she took him seriously, asking for details. He talked to her about Little Pennington.

"I think I should like to settle in England. You see I had no position in America. I should love a beautiful home under certain conditions."

"You ought to marry again."

"Yes, I suppose so."

She glanced at him with a shy, pathetic appeal. Tim said abruptly:

"If you married an Englishman, do you think that you could settle down, permanently, I mean, in England?"

"I should just love it."

She looked almost pretty. Tim's once familiar spirit, recklessness, possessed him. Alethea offered a solution to the problem of his future. She wanted him. And he knew that he could give her a quiet happiness, upon which she would set an inordinate value, because till now unhappiness had been her portion.

Almost—he jumped.

They made some pleasant expeditions together to Quimper, to the Pointe du Raz, to Vannes and Brest. Otis, as a rule, played gooseberry, but he had a trick of disappearing which Tim rather resented, because Otis gaily refused to believe that he was really wanted. He carried a sketch book, to save his disappearances. Alethea pottered in and

out of shops, buying things she did not want and paying more for them than their value, obviously at the mercy of shrewd shop-keepers, unless Tim interposed himself between guile and guilelessness. He watched her, thinking how intimate they had become in a few weeks. It was possible to be alone with her and keep silence, as if it were the pledge and seal of friendship. When such a silence lasted too long, a faint blush would steal into the lady's cheeks. He noticed that she became easily tired, hiding fatigue for his sake; and yet eager to accept a considerate cavalier's ministrations. Indeed, her gratitude for small attentions both touched and exasperated Tim. He kept on thinking: "What a rotten time she must have had with that brute!" To give her now as reasonably good a time as possible seemed to be the whole duty of any decently kind man. Evidently the brute had trampled savagely upon her opinions and judgments. Her deprecating manner, her prim "perhaps I am wrong" aroused a pity in Tim which she may have mistaken for a kindred sentiment.

When she smiled at him, he was disagreeably reminded of Ivy Jellicoe.

Moreover, he was sensible that she determined the tone of their intercourse. She pitched the key—a minor key. Her talk began and ended on a monotonously plaintive note. She might have feverish moments, but her temperature was below normal.

Very subtly, she dangled her wealth before him. She entreated his advice concerning some of her investments. Apparently she was spending about one-fourth of her income. It was impossible to escape from the accretions and expansions of her riches. Happily, she was never vulgar when she spoke of these ever-accumulating dollars. She sat upon her vast pile with an odd and disarming dignity. And she managed most astutely to convey a sharp impression of what her dollars had left undone for her. Up to the present moment (the unlamented Gideon had been in a marble mausoleum for two years), Boal's Axle Grease

seemed to have lubricated all the wheels in the world except hers.

She complained of an uninteresting youth. Tim envisaged her as young and pretty but isolated. She had been educated in Switzerland, at Lausanne. At her first coming-out party, the truculent Gideon had captured her.

Some of her self-revelations alarmed him. She was lamentably lacking in taste. She admired the wrong pictures, the wrong furniture and porcelain, although she dressed exquisitely. But her elegance was fictitious, being largely due to her Paris corsetière and milliner. She couldn't be trusted alone in a provincial hat-shop. At Vannes, for instance, she bought a monstrous affair, which she shewed to Tim and Otis in the railway carriage. Otis, pressed to pronounce judgment, said frankly:

"My dear woman, it isn't a hat, it's an awful warning."

Alethea turned to Tim.

"You like it, don't you, Mr. White?"

Tim replied kindly:

"If I had your face I shouldn't hide it under that hat."

She remained perfectly amiable and resigned.

"I shall leave it in the carriage."

The train stopped at Auray. Tim glanced out of the window. Close to the carriage stood a large young woman, who had discarded, apparently, the costume of the province. Her eyes gloated upon the hat, which Alethea still held in her hands. Tim seized the hat, jumped out of the carriage and approached the young woman.

"Mademoiselle," he said politely. "This is yours. We bought it for you in Vannes. Pray accept it with our united compliments."

"But, Monsieur——!"

"Not a word, I pray you."

"But——!"

"You will look ravishing in it. At Mass it will distract the attention of everybody. There!"

He left it in her hands. As the train moved out of the

station, the large young woman was seen gazing entranced at the hat, surrounded by a chattering and astounded crowd. Tim kissed his fingers to her, saying to Alethea:

"Last Sunday, she prayed for a new hat. From this moment her faith is assured."

"I'm glad she has it," said Otis, "but can she live up to it?"

That evening, after Alethea had retired (her word) to bed, Tim said to Otis:

"What is Mrs. Boal's Paris apartment like?"

"Like that hat. She doesn't know, poor dear!"

"But she thinks she does."

Indeed, beneath her anaemic manner lay a streak of obstinacy. She exhibited strong likes and dislikes, and was extraordinarily acute at detecting what she held to be blemishes, or worse. Poor little Lasher provoked the remark:

"He's shamelessly irreligious."

"Oh, no," replied Tim.

"But he *is*. He scoffs at religious people. He told me that he lived abroad because he could not stand the expression on the faces of people in England coming out of church."

"The smug, self-righteous look. I dare say poets find it trying, particularly when they're hungry. Some of his relations, perhaps, wanted Lasher to go to church, but did not invite him to luncheon afterwards."

"He's not fit to go to church, or to have luncheon with decent people. He is not clean."

"He isn't. Soap is one of his many economies. But he's kind. He's been kind to me."

"I hate to think that he could be."

Tim lent her *Rupert Carteret and his Times*. Here again she displayed almost startling acuteness. She read it carefully, not missing a line upon principle. Then she delivered her verdict—

"I like him because he was so like you. All through the book he reminds me of you."

"In what way?"

"He was so alive; and he tried many things, before he found what exactly suited him. I sometimes wonder——"

"Yes?"

"If there isn't some big success coming to you, something to make up for all you have suffered."

"A big success painting?"

"I wasn't thinking of your painting. Painters have not very much of a position in England, have they?"

"The smallest county magnate cuts 'em out," replied Tim.

A day or two afterwards he had a long talk with Lasher about literature. After what Otis had said, he was fired to speak of his novel to Lasher. He found the poet gently stimulated by absinthe. As a rule, he rarely uttered a word worth listening to before five in the afternoon. By dinner-time he became articulate, and towards midnight lucidly eloquent. This first important talk took place just before dinner. Tim ordered the apéritif.

"I told Otis," he began, "that I was thinking of chucking painting and going back to writing."

Lasher opened his big sleepy eyes.

"Why?" he demanded languidly.

"My painting is fake."

"Most painting is, and most writing, too. You aren't so mad as to hope to support yourself with your pen?"

"Well; yes."

"Got any stuff here?" Tim nodded. "You let me look at it. I'll tell you in two ticks what I think of it."

"I'm really most awfully obliged."

Lasher rolled a cigarette, gazing reflectively at Tim with appraising eyes.

"What are you *at?*" he grumbled. "Vilard and I come back to find you three fellows positively rank with undeserved prosperity."

Tim laughed cheerfully.

"That's it. Rank is the word. I can smell myself."

"Quite amazing," murmured Lasher. "Doesn't my awful example give you pause? I began with a sort of success. I wrote feuilletons for a daily paper, took a cold tub every morning and cut my hair. The quest for the right word has brought me to this. Encouraging, eh?"

Tim weighed the question, answering slowly: "There is nothing so discouraging as the wrong success."

"I felt like that once."

"So you flew the track."

"Flew the track is quite good. But the result isn't. I piled myself up, to borrow an illuminating expression from Otis. Same thing happened to Vilard and Gauguin, and Verlaine, and a dozen I could name. You'd better stick to the lines, Tim, particularly as you've been off 'em, and know what it is."

Tim muttered grimly: "I've been derailed right enough."

"Yes; but I derailed myself. That's a mighty difference. Now, look here, I'm just beginning to wake up. My mind is working. You mayn't catch me in this receptive and responsive mood for another month. Tell me what you really want?"

Tim hesitated. Lasher, as he knew, babbled sadly of his own misfortunes when drunk, but not of the affairs of others. Then he said, using the expression so long uppermost in his thoughts:

"Well, I want to make good. A lot was expected of me when I was a boy. I left home under a cloud. I have never been back."

Lasher's fine eyes twinkled. He was now immensely wide awake, stimulated by absinthe to an acuteness of perception seldom exercised.

"I understand perfectly. You wish to return to your native village trailing clouds of glory which will hide forever your little cloud of shame. The triumph of Tim!"

"Something like that."

"A self-glorification, to be brutally frank?"

"If you like."

"Well, I don't like. This is the age of self-advertisement. And I loathe it. People, nowadays, gabble more about the artist than his work. I don't think the artist matters a damn. But his work, if it is the real stuff, matters tremendously. I admit that artists are vain, particularly poets, but I say let the poet perish if only one sonnet may live. That isn't your idea, eh?"

"Not altogether."

"I thought not. And, mind you, I'm not blaming you. I like you, Tim, because you're so human, and so alive. Lord! How I envy you that! And if I can help you, I will. You're one of those lucky devils whom others like to help. I know some editors and publishers. I can steer you a bit. The right start counts, but I must know exactly what you're aiming at."

"Call it a novel that people want to read."

"What people? Are you yearning for the recognition of the few or the many?"

"Thomas Hardy appeals to both."

"Um! So he does; but he won the few before the many. I'll put it like this—are you contemplating the writing of a big seller?"

A derisive, sub-acid intonation provoked Tim to reply with some heat:

"I want, primarily, to work at something which will engross me. I'm not a beginner, Lasher. I served a fairly strenuous apprenticeship in California. And I've lived. I know the seamy side. I know what men and women are. And I've a sense of the beauty of life, which I can't get on to canvas."

"Soit! Not another word till I've seen your stuff. Give it to me now. I'll tackle it to-night. And, to-morrow, at this very hour, I'll tell you honestly what I think about it."

III

Next morning Tim went for a walk with Alethea. They climbed the hill behind the town, and wandered into the much-restored manor house, once the home of a Russian princess, now a historical monument and a museum. In it a collection of warming-pans challenged Alethea's interest and curiosity. These warming-pans had warmed the beds of queens, if you could credit the evidence of coats of arms engraved upon their shining backs. Tim said idly:

"I wonder if the Princess's bed was cold?"

He had to explain this to Alethea, who deemed the remark not quite proper. Tim went on:

"When a woman collects things, I always have my suspicions. Warming-pans are astoundingly significant. And one feels somehow that this one, if it be genuine, may have been a comfort to Marie Antoinette. Juliet, if she had lived, might have collected warming-pans."

"Such odd things you say! This house is very sad. I'm sure that you are right. The princess did collect things because she was not interested in persons. I have collected things."

"So Otis told me."

"I daresay I was imposed upon."

"It's dead certain you were."

She gave a little shudder, drawing a feather boa about her thin throat.

"Let's go and sit in the garden."

The garden showed signs of neglect, but they found a seat overlooking the harbour and the sea. Alethea sighed contentedly, but Tim was frowning. He had only to whistle and Alethea would flutter to him like a tame canary. Facing the sun, her skin looked slightly yellow. She moved restlessly, expecting him to speak. He sat perfectly still, thinking how warm and pleasant it was. An odd languor possessed him, a desire to drift with the tide, to let chance

carry him and his fortunes whither it pleased. And all the time he was conscious of something within him which fought against this enervating languor. He decided, presently, to hear Lasher's verdict, before he spoke to Alethea. Lasher might consider his writing with the same kind contempt which animated Cabral when he stared at Alethea's portrait.

"How silent you are!" murmured Alethea. "But I don't mind it; I rather like it."

There was some quality in her meek-eyed glance which seemed to beseech him to speak now, or not at all.

The ancient manor-house, restored and expanded, filled with tapestries and rare old furniture, with armour and porcelain and pictures, presented itself as an agreeable object lesson of what a rich woman's money could accomplish. A conscience which wriggled uneasily at the thought of a marriage of convenience was calmed with subtle sedatives. What good work he could do in a charming home of his own! How much could be *done* for others with Alethea's dollars! What a difference unlimited gold would make to hundreds of lives in and about Little Pennington!

And then the bleak, ironic reflection: "How easy to be generous with another's money! How cheap and tawdry a triumph!"

He glanced at his watch.

"We shall be late for déjeuner," he said.

IV

He spent the afternoon alone, wrestling with temptation, ravaged by it, swept hither and thither by gusty ambition, able to measure alike his strength and his weakness, and miserably conscious that his weakness might prevail.

Remember that he had begged his bread as a tramp, that he had lain weak and penniless in a hospital. If his health should fail him, would he not sink inevitably to the depths

which engulfed Lasher and Vilard? To place oneself high above such abominable possibilities, out of reach of Fortune's most cruelly barbed arrows, was not this a Heaven-sent opportunity which it were folly to pass by?

He returned to the hotel at six, spent in mind and body. As he approached the terrasse, he could see Lasher waiting for him, a shrunk, collapsed figure, a wreck of a man! The poet, on closer inspection, exhibited signs of impatience.

He drummed on the marble-topped table with fingers to which Alethea cannot be blamed for taking exception; an empty glass stood at his elbow in a saucer amongst many ends of cigarettes. Tim's typescript lay beside the saucer. It was a pleasant evening with no chill in the breeze. From the masts of the boats in the basin floated the filmy blue nets which captured the elusive sardine. Upon the broad quay men and women were talking and gesticulating. Beyond rose the grey walls of the Ville Close, the walls designed by Vauban to keep the English at bay. Tim never looked upon those solid ramparts without reflecting humorously upon the invasion of the province by Britons.

Lasher said quickly:

"I've read every line. And, by Jove! you are right to chuck painting. Why did you leave this remarkable chronicle half done?"

Tim explained that he had been too ill to write.

"I see," said Lasher. "Now, it's an odd fact that I work better when I feel ill. But, of course, my stuff is morbid. This stuff of yours is healthy. It's full of vitality. Finish it! And let me red-pencil it. Then you must have it retyped, and I'll charge myself with sending it to the right publisher. You need a fellow who'll boom you as a new and original author. First and last it shows extraordinary promise. I think it will catch on, but one never knows. You've been well trained."

Tim mentioned Hoyt. Lasher listened, nodding his head

with its shock of unkempt black hair. Then he said abruptly:

"How old are you, Tim?"

"Nearly thirty-three."

"That's the right age. Young writers suffer from their appalling ignorance of life. However gifted they may be, they turn out unreal stuff, which damns the better stuff which follows. You've escaped that. I'll just add this. I never believed in you as a painter. Nor has Vilard. It helped to tide you over a bad time. And you're clever enough and versatile enough to make a living at it, which is something. This," he tapped the manuscript, "captivated me, and I'm hard to please. It has freshness, humour, and it's on the side of the angels. The public love that. Also, it's simply written. Now don't get a swelled head. In ten years, if you concentrate all energies upon doing the very best of which you are capable, you may write a big book. I don't want to say another word till you've finished this thing according to your present lights. Then we'll go over every line together."

"You're a trump, Lasher."

"What are you?" asked Lasher. "Shall we say an archipelago of possibilities. Lord! How thirsty I am."

Tim took the hint. Lasher sipped his poison, murmuring:

"I'm glad you kept away from this."

Never had Tim felt so sorry for him. He wondered whether Lasher could be reclaimed. The poet, reading his thoughts, answered them derisively:

"Absinthe helps me to do my best work. It's what opium was to De Quincey. By the way, Tim, can you work at writing without any thought whatever of pot-boiling?"

"I've enough for a year."

"And nobody stands between you and your work?"

His dark eyes glittered feverishly. Tim flushed.

"No—woman?"

Tim remained for an instant silent, wondering if Lasher

could have guessed what was in his mind. He decided that Otis must have been indiscreet. He decided, also, that Lasher was keyed up to a strange pitch. Then he heard the poet's mocking laugh, and his mocking words:

"You were thinking just now of reclaiming me. That's a hopeless job. At the same moment I was thinking of reclaiming you. If I could, by God! it might be an asset, when the final accounting comes."

"You're very drunk, my dear old man."

"In vino veritas. You come with me. I've something to say to you, something to tell you. I'll play the scarecrow for you. I'll flap naked to the wind for you because I'm fond of you, Tim."

He stood up. Tim stood up also, as if he moved beneath a spell. Lasher took his arm, gripping it. Through a thin sleeve Tim felt burning fingers.

"I'm pot-valiant," said Lasher. "Come, my son, while the spirit of la reine verte still fortifies me."

He walked unsteadily across the quay. Tim went with him. They passed the causeway, and approached the stone digue, now deserted. Lasher pressed on, saying nothing, staring at the sea. The tide was out; and Tim could smell the varech on the wet rocks. Afterwards, whenever he recalled this evening, that pungent odour would assail his nostrils.

They stopped at the end of the digue. Lasher sat upon the parapet, dangling his feet. Tim stood facing him, filled with curiosity. Lasher had a trick of reading his own poems in a voice singularly free from inflection, an impressive monotone, as if he wished to present his wares as simply as possible. At such times, Tim was reminded of the Vicar, who delivered his message in a similar impersonal manner. Lasher chose to assume this monotone now. His voice seemed to reach Tim from a distance, as if the speaker had travelled far back into the past.

"I told you that I enjoyed once a sort of mild success.

And amazing as it may seem now, I was rather attractive as a young man. My people lived in Bayswater. My father and my brothers were and are in business—up to their thick red necks. From the first I was regarded as a bit of a freak. They were furious with me because I preferred quill-riding to quill-driving. They were stupid, stolid people; and they guessed, I suppose, that I should be a burden to them, that I should never be what they called 'self-supporting.' But deep down in their fat commercial souls fluttered the hope that I might marry money. To that desirable end they conspired together. I was ear-marked for a ward of my father's. I'll say this about her: she was amorphously commonplace. The only sign of intelligence that I could find was her liking for me. That, of course, appealed to my vanity, nothing else. She bored me to tears! But I said to myself that with her money—she had about two thousand a year—I could devote myself to writing. And so—I married her."

"You married her," repeated Tim.

Lasher laughed.

"It was infamous, empurpled prostitution. I want to rub that in. I left my self-respect at the altar, and it may be there still. In the vestry, after the ceremony, my mother, in nodding plumes, and still dove-grey silk, kissed me fondly and whispered: 'How beautifully, dearest, everything has gone!' I replied, I remember, with a humour rather creditable at such a moment: 'Everything *has* gone!' And she never saw the point. Well, as I was saying, my self-respect never came back, which accounts for a lot. Perhaps I ought to feel sorry for my wife, but she knew jolly well what she was doing. She *did* for me. We had two children."

"Children," echoed Tim, stupefied at these revelations.

"Two pulpy kids cut to the Lasher pattern. She was a cousin of sorts, I must tell you. She inherited the family obstinacy and conceit. The great sell of her life was not marrying me, but the discovery shortly afterwards that she

couldn't make me over to suit her notions. She boasted to her people that she would and could remodel me! Poor little fool! I'm afraid I gave her the deuce of a time. I had a typist, a very clever, jolly girl, who understood me. Amy —my wife's name was Amy; it couldn't be anything else, could it?—Amy hired a private detective. There was an awful row, a poisonous, back-biting scene in my father's drawing-room. It had to be repapered afterwards. It was agreed solemnly that I must choose between Amy and the other. I chose the other. That's all that matters."

The smell of the varech grew stronger; the sea breeze held a sudden chill. Tim stammered out: "And the other?"

Lasher laughed, spreading out his hands, a trick he had caught from Vilard.

"I bolted from Bayswater for ever and ever, but I hadn't the pluck to take the other with me. She wanted to come! I'm glad she didn't. She's all right, happily married. My remarkable abstention in regard to her may be acclaimed as a solitary virtue. The unpardonable sin against myself, mark you! was marrying Amy."

Tim said nothing; Lasher could see that he was tremendously impressed. He dropped his monotone, and spoke vehemently:

"Men make their own particular hells on earth. The most abysmal of all is a loveless marriage. I think I could do with just one more drink."

They returned to the hotel. Tim dined with Otis and Alethea. After dinner they sat out together, enjoying the cool of the evening. Presently, from the shadows of the dimly-lighted market-place, two men, arm in arm, lurched into view. They passed within a few yards of Alethea; and one of them was bawling a chanson d'atelier.

Mon père me maria!
  Hé, piou, piou! Tra-là-là!
Mon père me maria
  Au fils d'un avocat—ah—ah—ah—ah!

"Mercy!" exclaimed Alethea. "That was your friend, Mr. Lasher. Has he lost every shred of self-respect?"

Tim answered sombrely.

"He has. He left it on an altar in a Bayswater church."

CHAPTER V

FORTUNE SMILES

I

TIM bolted from Concarneau the next morning, taking his novel with him to Rochefort-en-terre, and leaving his colour-box behind. He chalked upon it R.I.P. He left behind, also, a letter for Alethea, a composition which exacted hours of not too agreeable thought. Finally, two closely-written sheets were boiled down to a couple of pages. He stated the bald fact. He was going away to work at his novel amongst the hills, which he hoped might inspire him. He ended simply: "I have wrestled with myself. I feel as Rupert Carteret did. I must find the work which really engrosses me. Perhaps that is all that is left." Then he thanked her for many pleasant hours passed in her company, and expressed a vague wish that they might meet again. He encountered Otis at early breakfast. That sophisticated schemer said significantly:

"I hope this isn't an irrevocable blunder."

"It's irrevocable," replied Tim curtly.

"I think you must have eaten the loco weed in California."

"Perhaps I did."

A laugh from Otis dispelled the slight coolness between them. He said delightfully:

"Old Tim, you may be sane enough about this novel-writing. Last time I was in London town I found Mudie's crowded, and the National Gallery almost empty."

This absence of illusion in the American was not unbecoming in the Man, but left the Artist rather stark. What was an Artist without illusions? A fountain without spray!

Tim loved Otis, and could appreciate his point of view while the conviction gathered irresistibly that his friend and he looked at life with different eyes. Otis knew what he wanted. He had become extremely ingenious and prehensile in the practice of his art, so much so that, given a pupil with technical dexterity, he could almost "dictate" a picture. He applied his ingenuity as skilfully in the sale of stuff, which might well be termed "machines." Humanly speaking, he would arrive at his goal—public recognition of an ability to paint marines branded as his, although each contained much that was pilfered from others.

Otis dropped a hint that Alethea would find consolation in the person of an Italian prince, whom he nicknamed Capo di Monte, because he was so decorative. Tim guessed that Alethea's interest in the Russian princess might have been quickened by a premonition that a coronet glittered for her out of a misty future. A "position" counted greatly with the little lady.

Altogether he felt wonderfully exhilarated when he found himself alone in the train.

II

The door of the ancient inn at Rochefort stood hospitably open when Tim descended some hours later from the diligence. Two smiling spinsters greeted him cordially, and assured him that he would not be disturbed by noisy tourists.

"Tout est calme chez nous," they murmured.

Tim wandered through the quaint village before dinner, noting the grass in the streets, the lichen on the grey walls, and the curiously carved doorways. Silence and peace soothed him. This was indeed a sanctuary for a man who desired to give undivided energies to writing, and at the same time to detach himself as far as possible from his surroundings.

He was ushered into a scrupulously clean, freshly whitewashed bedroom, overlooking the valley below. The en-

compassing hills were rugged and rocky, covered for the most part with pines. He could smell the resin, balsamic fragrance very different from the odours of a fishing port. Flowers bloomed in old-fashioned gardens; vines wandered everywhere. He breathed, in fine, a lighter, brighter, more benignant air. A blurred past gave promise of a clearer present. In his recovered perception of "values," he saw that any triumph worth the winning must be engineered by himself alone. And the conviction that he had rounded a dangerous corner made him feel almost young again.

For twenty-four hours he rested on folded wings, knowing that soon he would soar into the blue.

III

He remained at Rochefort-en-terre for three months, working hard. At first he experienced enormous difficulty: but slowly the ability to write came back, and with it a sense of the immense advantage which the quill has over the brush. At times he laughed at the notion that he could ever have been fatuous enough to think that he could express himself in colour. For it came ultimately to that. What he craved was self-expression. His half-finished novel engrossed and captivated Lasher, because it was so obviously a sincere record, a transcript of life as it is lived in a new country by men and women untrammelled by the conventions of a too complex civilisation.

A refreshed consciousness of the past, that happy past at Agua Caliente, was so clearly envisaged at Rochefort that it seemed to become the present. He tasted joys again which then had been gobbled too swiftly. Now they lingered upon his palate, like the bouquet of a fine wine. He was in no hurry, realising that haste had always been his enemy. He seemed to be strolling leisurely to an inevitable end, keenly observant, afraid only that he might lose the elusive atmos-

phere, so distractingly iridescent, which coloured his memories and fancies.

He had never been so happy since Magdalena's death. Indeed, it occurred to him that Magdalena hovered near him. She glided into his dreams with a tender smile upon her dear face, whispering her love. That revealed itself more conspicuously than ever as the supreme thing in life, a platitude upon every lip, but how seldom assimilated!

He returned to Concarneau for Christmas with the completed manuscript in his bag. The warmth of his reception touched him deeply. His comrades had missed him. He felt ashamed to think that he had not missed them; for his work had engrossed him. They told him that there was much distress in the town, and later Otis showed him a cheque just received from Alethea, a hundred pounds for the women and children.

"We are to distribute it," said Otis. "She named you, old man."

"Is Mrs. Boal in Paris?"

"No, Florence. The Italian Prince has got her. He's not a bad chap; and her money is settled on herself, tight as wax. All the same——"

He made a gesture. Tim said emphatically: "She had an escape from me."

"Wasn't it the other way about? However, the incident, as the papers say, is closed."

"Hermetically sealed," added Tim.

"Is the great work done?"

"It is. We'll see what Lasher says."

Lasher said some encouraging things, and assisted Tim in the final revision, deleting adjectives and adverbs with ruthless energy. Finally, the book was sent to England to be re-typed, with instructions to the typist to send the fair copy to Broad, the publisher. Lasher wrote to Broad, assuring him that the novel merited special attention; but Tim had to wait a weary fortnight before he heard from the great man. Broad offered to publish it in the Spring,

paying twenty-five pounds on account of royalties, and ten per cent on every six-shilling copy sold up to two thousand. If more copies were sold, the royalty would be increased to twelve and a half, and ultimately fifteen if the ten thousand mark were achieved. Lasher said that the terms were just rather than generous. Broad could be trusted to do all that was possible; he had read the novel and liked it. No man living could predict how a work by an unknown author would be received by the British public.

"We are justified," said Tim, "in having a celebration."

A dinner duly took place on Twelfth Night, and is still spoken of in Concarneau as the finest gastronomic effort of the chef at the Hôtel des Voyageurs.

IV

"My stock is booming," said Tim to Otis, some three weeks later.

He shewed Otis a letter just received from his attorney in Santa Barbara. The Syndicate owning Agua Caliente had sold the property for four hundred thousand dollars. Tim's share, in terms English, amounted to eight thousand pounds, which would be remitted by draft within a month.

"Another celebration," said Otis.

Never did Fortune dispense a favour more opportunely. Tim was waiting for proof, and unable to begin another book. A listless reaction had set in; he lay awake wondering whether ideas for a second novel would ever come to him. Lasher cheered him up:

"The ideas will arrive in battalions. Never worry about that. For the moment you're played out, an excellent sign. It shews that you put all you had into *Dust*."

That was the title of Tim's book. It dealt largely with the dry years in California, but at the end rain laid the dust.

He had thoughts of returning to Little Pennington, but decided that he couldn't face the Lenten season. However,

he wrote to the Vicar that he might be expected after Easter. And he wrote also to Daffy, telling her that at last he had drifted into snug anchorage. Daffy congratulated him warmly. At the end of her letter she told Tim that Rokeby had just left England for East Africa, where he hoped to slay many lions. She concluded: "A friend and I are thinking of spending a few weeks in Brittany. Don't be surprised if you see us in Concarneau." He replied by return of post urging her to come, saying that it would give him enormous pleasure, and singing the praises of Finistère in early Spring.

The thought of seeing Daffy, and the horrid fear that he mightn't, brimmed him with excitements. Renewed intercourse with this old friend would be the keystone of the arch which bridged the past and the future. He had never lost touch with her. He knew that they would meet with no exasperating, unsuspected differences and discrepancies, such as marred so many foregatherings between friends long severed.

He tried to analyse his feeling for Daffy, but it escaped analysis. They had both changed; but such change had not affected his conviction that he would be more at home with her than anybody else, which constituted a rare felicity, a sense of well-being, warming a man to the core. He decided impatiently that if she didn't come to him soon, he must go to her.

She came a few days later.

V

He heard of her arrival from the good landlady. Madame, she said, was out; her friend was lying down, fatigued after the journey. Madame did not look fatigued. Much the contrary! What a beauty, that one! And of a distinction! Tim listened impatiently. He wanted to meet Daffy alone. He felt sure that the same desire animated her. Where

had she gone? The landlady apostrophised her patron Saint. How could she tell?

Tim rushed into the market-place. The wind blew from the west. Daffy would stroll up-wind. That was certain. He would find her gazing across the sea.

He found her not far from the little grey chapel of Notre Dame de Bon Secours, the chapel facing the sea, in which the women gather together to pray, when the storms rage, and the men they love are in deadly peril. He saw her tall, slender figure, and quickened his steps. His heart throbbed. In a moment she would turn, holding out both her hands, smiling sagaciously.

And it was so. Although he moved lightly, her quick ear caught his step. Swiftly she turned, a glad exclamation escaping her:

"Tim!"

"Daffy, dear! This is splendid."

He was holding her small hands, gazing into her blue eyes, unable to speak, thinking of his dead wife and the years that the locusts had eaten, reading, too, the writing upon her fine face, noting the subtle changes which Time had wrought, deciding that she was more beautiful than ever, a noble woman, nobly planned.

She sighed as she withdrew her hands.

"You heard me coming?"

"Oh, yes."

His heart swelled with exultation. That she had heard meant so much, a thousand things never to be put into words.

"Let us walk to the rocks, Daffy. How clever of you to choose this very moment! How like you!"

The tide was out. The rocks, covered with varech, stretched into the sea. Tiny waves rippled against them. Upon the horizon the islets of Glénan lay softly blue, seen through a thin silvery mist. To the right was the Point of Penmarch. Brooding over the sea, as if, like Aphrodite,

she had just emerged from the deep, hovered the Spirit of Spring.

"How heavenly!" said Daffy.

They moved slowly across the beach. The gulls were mewing overhead; the brown-sailed boats glided home. It was impossible to say anything because there was so much to say. Impulse moved Tim to utter wild words, to tell his dear friend that this moment had become an imperishable experience, that the sight of her held a grace and a benediction which even she could never understand. In the darkness, with the great light of Penmarch flashing intermittently, he might have spoken. He held his peace, because Peace seemed to dominate all things and all men.

"You are in mourning," he said.

"My mother is dead."

She stated the fact calmly. Tim offered no condolence. His grudge against Mrs. Carmichael vanished. She became to him what the dry years had been, dust of an irrevocable past. Daffy murmured almost inaudibly:

"Poor mother! She meant well."

That was her epitaph, spoken by the child of her womb. Did she know now, this masterful woman, that meaning well she had wrought ill? Had death sealed her hard eyes only to open them to the light? What an awakening that would be! Tim hesitated; then he said quietly:

"Did your mother arrange your marriage?"

"Yes," said Daffy.

Without another word, he understood that Daffy had ceased to harbour hard thoughts against her mother. They, too, were dust which tears has washed away forever.

"Tell me about your book," said Daffy.

"My book is myself, Daffy."

"I know; that is why I want to hear all about it."

"You are exactly the same," he exclaimed.

"Only in that," she answered.

VI

Tim, however, did not talk of his book; he proposed to read the rough draft aloud to her. He asked for news of the Vicar. Had she been to Little Pennington?

"My mother is buried there."

She continued tranquilly, her eyes softening when she spoke of the Vicar. The dear man was well, unchanged, a saint for all sinners to admire and love.

"I long to see him again."

"But why haven't you? Was it fair to him?"

For his mother's sake, he dared not tell the truth. And without it explanations and excuses gave out a hollow sound.

"Don't press me too hard, Daffy. I couldn't. I felt the same about meeting you."

She smiled: "What a pride!"

"Go on; tell me about the village."

She did so with an admirable simplicity.

"It remains a resting-place. I like to go there. I was confirmed in the church."

"Do you think I had forgotten?"

"I can even look with melancholy pleasure at the stained glass windows."

"Like the apostolic Benner. Is he alive?"

"Very much so. He is never happier than when talking about you. You are not forgotten, Tim."

"It is pleasant to hear that."

"I sat in the Dell, but the cave has fallen in. The limes in the churchyard have been pollarded."

"Did my—my father talk much to you of me?"

"Oh, yes."

But she did not repeat what the Vicar had said. Tim remained silent, thinking that the water of her mind was too clear and bright for fishing. He said pensively:

"We have corresponded regularly; I have all his letters; and yet——"

He paused, meeting her glance, wondering why it was interrogative.

"And yet——?"

"Ah, well, you can read them. They are concerned with me and others, not enough with himself."

"I can understand that you don't know him—really. That is something illuminating to come."

"Daffy, do you feel that you know him?"

"Yes."

Her reserves exasperated him, but he accepted them with the compensating reflection that if the Vicar still remained something of a mystery, she—bless her!—in her attitude towards himself was the same sweet creature not ashamed of her loyalty and affection for the lover of childhood.

"What a friend you are!" he exclaimed.

She flushed delicately, smiling at his enthusiasm.

As they returned to the hotel, she told him about Alice Peronet, a sage, who from the high tower of a chaste widowhood beheld mankind as mostly fools.

"Your watch-dog?"

"That is quite unnecessary. No; a pal. You will like her."

"I shall adore her if she leaves us alone."

"We must leave her alone; she bargained for that."

He spoke briefly of his friends, whom she met presently on the terrasse; and he perceived that she was seeing him through them. She was especially kind to Lasher, winning him at once by the quotation of a line from one of his poems. The men surrounded her, paying homage. She accepted it with the air of a great lady accustomed to lip-service and able to appraise it.

Mrs. Peronet joined them. Tim eyed her with interest. If Daffy essayed a better knowledge of himself through the personalities of his comrades, why should not he achieve a surer analysis of her through Mrs. Peronet?

At first sight the petticoated sage challenged pity. She

looked frail and insignificant till her eyes flashed. And the grasp of an emaciated claw was reassuring, almost defiantly so, as if it were a warning not to confound physical weakness with lack of vitality. When Daffy met her with the obligatory question: "I hope, Alice, you aren't too tired?" she replied trenchantly: "Tired, my dear! I'm never tired in a new place amongst new people." And it was she, not Daffy, who insisted upon dining at the long table where Cabral presided. She said to Tim:

"Good food is wasted on me. I eat enough, no more, to keep body and soul together. Good talk nourishes me."

She was so thin, that Tim was tempted to reply:

"I fear you have not had much of it lately."

She deftly picked the unspoken thought out of his mind.

"I hope to gain weight here."

After dinner, in the café, Cabral and Otis captured Daffy. Tim found himself alone with Mrs. Peronet, who smoked many cigarettes. He discovered that Daffy was her favourite theme of conversation. He wondered whether Daffy were aware of this. Did she realise, hating, as she did, to talk about herself, that Alice Peronet would tell what she shrank from telling. It might well be so.

Mrs. Peronet liked straight going. She said abruptly to him:

"Of course we came here to inspect you."

"Capital. I'm in parade order."

"Appearances are a mockery. You look uncommonly well. I look ill and spooky, but really I'm one of the healthiest and sanest women in the world. I wanted to meet you, Mr. White, because I'm Daffy's best woman friend, and I know what her affection is for you. I hope you're worthy of it."

"I share that hope," replied Tim gravely.

"She is quite wonderful; and I can assure you that I have the soundest critical apprehension of her."

Her sparkling eyes challenged him to ask questions.

"I can see," he went on slowly, "that she has suffered."

"It has strengthened her. Rokeby is an egotist and a fool."

"Why did she marry him? I met him in California, as you know." She nodded; he continued eagerly: "I saw that the marriage was a failure, but I dared not ask her why she had chosen him."

Mrs. Peronet laughed scornfully.

"I guessed then what I know to-day, that her mother made the match, but Daffy has a strong will of her own."

"That caused the trouble. Her will clashed with her mother's. There were ructions between them at home. That is the primary cause of most disastrous marriages. Rokeby was a great parti. Mrs. Carmichael played her cards cleverly. She gave Rokeby to understand that Daffy was in love with him; she persuaded Daffy that Rokeby was in love with her—the wicked, silly game which has wrecked so many lives. Daffy, poor innocent! fondly believed that she would be a helpmeet to Rokeby. Oh, the fatuity of it! That is at once her strength and her weakness, the desire to help others, which was inspired in her by your father."

"By *him?*"

"Surely you knew that?"

"It has escaped me."

Mrs. Peronet seemed surprised.

"He is a saint, sanctified by self-sacrifice."

"I give you my word that I never saw her by his light."

"She must be seen in the right light."

Tim said warmly: "Daffy can brave the sun."

"I tell you she is best seen by reflected light."

"Talking with you, I am beginning to believe it."

"Her early upbringing has been a tremendous influence, colouring and discolouring all her actions. I have been to the happy village; and I'm not surprised. And often and often I've wondered whether Daffy's affection for the Vicar

of Little Pennington is a radiation of her affection for you, or vice versa."

Tim made no reply.

He went to bed feeling exuberantly happy.

VII

Daffy and Alice Peronet listened to the reading aloud of *Dust*. They sat in Timothy's studio, where Alethea's portrait framed rather too gorgeously, stood upon the big easel. Tim had promised to send it to the Salon; and Cabral just hinted, no more, that he might pull strings with the jury. At any rate, the good fellow promised that the portrait should be generously considered. Otis said:

"It'll be hung all right."

Neither Daffy nor her friend knew much about painting; and it seemed to them that Tim had achieved a remarkable success. So much so that Mrs. Peronet became eager for Tim to paint Daffy. This he refused to do, although consent meant long hours alone with his sitter.

"If your novel is as good as that——!" Mrs. Peronet left the sentence unfinished.

"You shall be the judge."

From the first chapter, the book gripped them. He could see that. And he guessed that his listeners were fairly representative of the better class of readers. But he entreated them to withhold criticism till the end. When that end came Daffy's eyes were wet, tribute most precious to all authors. Mrs. Peronet spoke with authority:

"It has atmosphere. I've never been to California, but I see this ranch. Set me down in the middle of it and I should know where I was. Also, you have subordinated your effects to your theme, no easy job, that! Your values stand out. I call it a fine piece of drawing for a beginner. And your knowledge of painting, your sense of colour, has helped you. As soon as it is published I shall despatch

hundreds of postcards to my friends telling them that it is a book to buy."

"You are most awfully kind."

"Daffy will do more, because her friends are innumerable."

"My acquaintances, Alice."

This was pleasant and satisfactory, although Tim was exacerbated at the time by the fear that success, if it were indeed his, might be ephemeral. To soar like a rocket, and fall like its stick, had been the unhappy lot of many men, one-book men, one-picture men. Into *Dust* he had put himself, his own experiences and feelings. His next novel must perforce be largely imaginary. Alice Peronet pooh-poohed such apprehensions. In common with Otis she dwelt upon the importance of a fine start.

Meanwhile, a letter had come from Broad, suggesting a pseudonym, because there happened to be a well-known novelist of the name of White. Tim discussed this at some length with the ladies, who knew that he had been both Green and Brown.

"And I felt Black," he added.

"But that has passed?" murmured Daffy.

"Yes."

She said slowly:

"Would Grey do?"

Mrs. Peronet approved of Grey, so did Lasher, although he pointed out that to him there was something comic in these parti-coloured changes of name. Tim admitted that it was an idiosyncrasy, and he was longing to tell Daffy that he had no right to the Vicar's patronymic. The secret of his parentage had been withheld even from Magdalena.

Grey!

He pondered over the name for forty-eight hours, beneath grey skies, looking across grey waters. The conviction came to him that this would be the last name, and the most fitting—for grey, the grey of the Breton landscape, held all colours in its sober keeping. Finally he wrote to Broad,

telling him that he had chosen Grey as a nom-de-plume. What more fitting, replied the eminent publisher, than a pseudonym which suggested the quill from the grey goose. Tim laughed at this mild joke because Lasher contended that nearly all scribblers were geese. At the table d'hôte Timothy Grey was toasted. Tim said derisively:

"A fitter name for me would be Blanc d'Espagne."

He had to interpret this quip to Alice Peronet.

"Blanc d'Espagne means white-wash."

"Indeed!" Her eyes probed his very heart. "You really feel that?"

He replied grimly:

"Ever since you arrived."

BOOK FIVE: GREY

BOOK FIVE: GREY

CHAPTER I

SPINDRIFT

I

DAFFY and Tim did not break new ground till they had traversed together the old paths down which they had wandered as children. And Tim soon discovered that her memory of those joyous days was even more tenacious than his own. She recalled the butterfly-hunting expeditions to capture some rare fritillary in Pennington High Wood, or the brilliant "Chalk-hill blue" to be found on the downs near Winchester amongst whins where the stonechats nested. They spent an hour talking over a tremendous enterprise, the re-levelling of a tennis-court. Eustace Pomfret had been impressed into service with a barrow, which he would wheel full of earth along a narrow plank, invariably upsetting it. And then Tim and Daffy would laugh at his serious, distressed face. Tim asked for news of the old "Plodder." It appeared that he took himself more seriously than ever; he was in Orders—so Tim learned—and Vicar of a big suburban parish, a celibate.

"He couldn't change much," affirmed Tim.

"Do any of us change—much?"

"What?"

She explained:

"My sisters are just the same. Annie married a Suffragan Bishop; she has four children. Carrie is an old maid. They repeat the same phrases. 'I quite agree' is still Annie's

cheval de bataille. Carrie is sure that everything is for the best in the best of worlds. And you and I, Tim——"

She paused, smiling at him.

"We have changed."

"We were mutineers. And we are so to-day."

"Are we?"

"Under our skins. One learns, of course, to dissemble. Poor Mother! Towards the close of her life I never argued with her; and I never argue with Rokeby. How inept this forcing of one's opinions down other people's throats. They then cease to be one's own."

"So you keep yours under lock and key."

"I shew them to a very few friends."

"Shew them to me."

"Presently."

He marked her reluctance to talk about herself, but gradually the routine of her life was unrolled. Hunting and shooting engrossed Rokeby from October till March; then followed four months in London; after the season was over they went to Scotland. They entertained hosts of friends coming and going in a never-ending procession. Tim said warmly:

"Surely you loathe that?"

"Rokeby likes it," she replied evasively.

"Sounds to me a tread-mill."

"It is."

"Poor Daff!"

But she frowned slightly when he pitied her, changing the subject. He consoled himself with the reflection that she looked strong and well.

"Health," he remarked, "is a tremendous asset. During my black phase I could think of nothing else. My mind poisoned my body; and exercising my body purged my mind."

"Hunting works that way with me."

"Long ago, I met a fellow in San Francisco. Sir Somebody Jocelyn——"

"Harry Jocelyn?"

"Yes; he said that you went like a bird."

"Poor Harry! He has come to sad grief, ran off with another man's wife. They are living at Dinard, I believe. He wanted to marry her, but she couldn't get a divorce."

"A dog-in-the-manger trick!"

"Many men are like that. It is rather a pitiful revenge."

She sighed. Tim tried quite in vain to read her thoughts, wondering whether Rokeby was a gentleman of the dog-in-the-manger kidney.

"I should like to hunt again," he observed.

"One becomes a slave to it," said Daffy. "I can assure you that a master's wife has no easy billet."

"Then this is a real holiday for you, dear."

"It is indeed."

II

He watched her with children, Concarneau's never-failing crop. The Spring fishing was slightly better than usual, alleviating the general distress brought about by the sardine famine, but many went hungry. Alethea had loosened generously her purse-strings, tightening those of her heart, perhaps, in a not unnatural revulsion against dirt and squalor. Daffy—so Tim perceived—exhibited no such shrinkings. Alethea would talk sentimentally about a pretty, clean baby, and on such occasions Tim would have a vision of her going to some well-appointed orphanage and picking out the prettiest boy in it with a view to adopting him, if he proved sweet and good and worthy (a favourite word of Alethea's). Daffy, on the other hand, sought the most forlorn specimens, protesting vehemently against conditions which according to her view should be wiped out of existence by the concerted wealth and intelligence of the world. She dealt with such conditions sanely and practically, calling in the doctor if he were needed, speaking to the local authorities and the parents, quite undaunted by difficulties

which frightened Alethea. Tim became gradually sure that her most poignant regret was childlessness, a regret ineffectually hidden from Alice Peronet, who confirmed Tim's diagnosis of a secret malady. Daffy, too, betrayed herself again and again.

She said to Tim:

"The hearth here is everything—le foyer Breton. Souvestre fails there lamentably. His stories, charming though they are, arouse an expectation which is never satisfied. The title is misleading. Nobody has described so admirably the manners and customs of the province, but he deals with the rind, not the core. Le Braz, too, is more concerned with legend and costume and functions than with the heart of the people. Bazin might do it. Botrel, in some of his simplest verses, has captured exactly what I mean." She quoted—

Les petits sabots des petits Bretons.
  Petites Bretonnes,
Chantent des chansons en differents tons,
  Jamais monotones—*Toc, toc!*
Chers petits sabots des petits Bretons
  Trop tot l'on vous quitte:
Des petits Bretons les petits petons
  Grandissent trop vite! *Toc, toc!*

Many talks upon this subject fired Tim with an eager desire to begin another novel, dealing with Breton life and character. Daffy pointed out that, to her mind, the supreme merit of the first book was due to its sincerity. It convinced the reader because it dealt solely with experiences through which the writer had passed. Daffy was sure that Tim ought to continue upon the same simple lines. Every word she uttered became suggestive, and in speaking of women and children she, quite unconsciously, furnished him with information and experience which he, as unconsciously, assimilated and garnered. She was never happier or more intelligent than when discussing with him what a

woman would or would not do, given certain conditions. In dealing with men, Tim needed no assistance.

Finally, he selected a theme entirely Breton. The story dealt with peasants and fisherfolk, types sharply contrasted, for the peasant is slow-witted, cautious and thrifty, whereas the fisherman is his antithesis, intelligent, reckless and a spendthrift of earnings which may be large "quand la sardine donne." Together Daffy and Tim wandered into the farmyards and homesteads, into the huts of the sabotiers, into the grey houses of the fishermen. Out of the mouths of little children flowed innumerable answers to their questions, for the parents are exasperatingly reserved, eyeing with suspicion the strangers who wander through the province.

"This will be a big book," predicted Daffy.

And if it were Tim decided that he would owe his inspiration to her, his dear old friend, and that when she left him the fountain would be sealed. He began to count the days that remained; he began to envisage himself alone; he began, alas! to envisage himself and her together, never to be parted except by death.

No woman, he reflected sadly, had appealed to him as Daffy did. She seemed to have been created to satisfy every side of him, the physical, the mental, and the spiritual. Comparisons between her and Magdalena were impossible. The fact that he had loved his wife so tenderly and so faithfully enabled him to grasp what love in its supreme fulness might mean. He could give to Daffy all that had been given to Magdalena—and how much more? And always the thought consumed him: From the first she was mine!

III

They made an expedition to the Pointe du Raz, passing through the country of the Bigoudens, the wildest part of the province, where the women descendants of Phœnicians remain oriental to this day.

When they reached the Pointe, a gale happened to be blowing. Huge waves were breaking upon the granite rocks; thundering surges rolled in from the Atlantic. To the right lay the terrible Bay des Trépassés. The man who serves as guide to tourists warned Tim that the wind upon the headland would be furious. Tim, however, knew well the narrow track which overhangs the caldron of turbulent waters, and Daffy assured him that her nerves were to be relied on. She, indeed, urged upon him her desire to stand upon the most westerly point of France, and to behold the glorious spectacle of wind and waves in wildest conflict. And, truly, there is no more awful and sublime phenomenon in the world than this duel à outrance which rages but rarely, and in its most tremendous fury only when the Spring tides are at their height, and running against a sou-westerly gale.

"You are not afraid?" said Tim.

"Do I look so?" she asked.

He gazed at her keenly. Her black serge skirt and jacket, closely fitting, accentuated the fine lines of her form and the fair colouring of a face glowing beneath the lashing wind. Her blue eyes sparkled with excitement.

"Follow me," said Tim.

He moved cautiously along the slippery face of the cliff, instructing Daffy to tread carefully in his steps. For a few minutes they were comparatively sheltered from the blast, but the roar of the breakers upon the rocks below was punctuated by shrill whistlings and wailings, as if some vast monster were in anguish.

"I have never known it like this," said Tim.

He had to shout at her. She nodded, smilingly.

"We're in big luck," Tim added.

They reached a corner, the last sheltering place.

"I'll reconnoitre," said Tim.

He left her in the shelter. By this time there was no doubt either in his mind or hers that the warnings of the guide had been justified. Their adventure was fraught with grave peril. As Tim rounded the corner, the gale seemed

to strike him. He staggered back with a sharp exclamation. Then, securing his foothold, he turned a reassuring glance at Daffy, at the moment when she was least prepared to meet it. For an instant she thought that Tim would be dashed into the gulf below. It had never occurred to her that he would look back.

What he saw drove him mad with exultation. He faced the gale, knowing that she loved him. The question, so insistent of late, was answered. Her friendship had never been in doubt, but had it cooled the old love? Was she tormented by the pangs which assailed him, whenever he thought of what might have been?

Her face revealed everything she had suppressed so valiantly. It was piteous with anxiety, twisted by misery. He divined that had he slipped and fallen she would have perished with him, leaping after him. Yes; she was capable of that.

He crawled on till he reached the vantage point, whence the scene below might be watched in all its immense splendour and majesty. To stand there with Daffy seemed to him to be the greatest moment of his life. If they were dashed to destruction, what of it? He recked nothing of such a death nor would she. The tumult in their hearts matched the tumult of the elements.

He returned to her. She wondered whether he knew. His face was as impassive as hers. He was obliged to put his mouth to her ear.

"It's hardly safe," he whispered.

"I'll risk it with you," she answered confidently.

He smiled. The risk which beguiled him presented itself as enchantingly to her. To share a common danger—can love demand a finer test?

"I'll go first. Grip my coat with both hands. Slowly does it."

She obeyed breathlessly; he heard a sigh of satisfaction as she grasped his coat.

Then step by step, they ascended the cliff, drenched by the spray from the waves.

IV

When they had crawled in safety to the uttermost point, Tim placed Daffy between himself and the precipice, so that she was sheltered by his body and a great rock. Upon this spot, soon afterwards, the divine Sarah stood alone, when a tempest was raging, and watched the waters. Nothing could be imagined more likely to "expand the spirit and appal" than such a scene. The high Alps, inaccessible at such a moment, might, as Byron suggested, excite similar emotions, but one conceives that a man at the top of the Matterhorn when a ninety-mile-an-hour gale is blowing would be engrossed by the certainty of immediate death. The sun blazed out between inky clouds. The ocean was a pale, lurid grey where the sun shone upon it; the clouds cast deep indigo shadows. The line of battle where wind met tide was a wall of foam with streamers of spindrift whirling upwards. From the hollows of the cliffs below rumbled a deep diapason note, dominating the other sounds—the shrieking of the blast, the crashing of the breakers, and the swish of the spray.

Daffy and Tim gazed in fascination. Nature seemed to be groaning and travailing beneath the pangs of some tremendous birth. Across the northeasterly horizon stretched a double rainbow. Every colour and every gradation of colour might be found in either sky or sea.

Presently Tim's thoughts turned inwards. He beheld with clearest vision past storms and tumults which had swept him hither and thither like the spindrift upon the ocean, or a bird struggling to fly against the wind, and suddenly whirled in the opposite direction. Often he had envied men who seemed to forget dark and bitter hours, whose memories lingered in the sunshine, tasting and retasting some small triumph, chewing the cud of it forever and ever.

What an attribute, making for peace and happiness, this complacent, indolent self-glorification! It had never been his lucky lot thus to forget pain and to gloat over past pleasure.

A revulsion of passion gripped and shook him. He stood by his wife's grave, seeing her dear body lowered into the earth, soon to be transmuted into corruption and dust. What a terrifying, agonising moment that had been. Afterwards he had loathed the idea—so sweet to many—of revisiting her grave. He could conceive of her anywhere except in that narrow, abominable box! Amongst his papers in a despatch box were instructions that his own body should be cremated, and that the ashes should be flung to the cleansing winds and waters.

He turned his face and met Daffy's eyes.

"What is it?" she asked, seeing the torment and misery in his heart.

He did not answer.

There is no such appeal to women as this, the weakness of a strong man, far more irresistible than his strength, which evokes that poignant pity which is indeed akin to love. Daffy's ministering hands sought his. All the sympathy which at such moments can flow from a noble woman flowed in fullest measure to this stricken friend. But she, also, said not a word, as the tears rolled down her cheeks. Tim gripped her hands.

She trembled, averting her eyes.

He saw his advantage, but did not press it, wondering afterwards what power had restrained him in that wild minute when the tempest within and without blew from each the last rags of restraint. The crisis passed as the wind seemed to increase in volume. Every second spent upon this exposed spot endangered Daffy's life.

"We must go back," he muttered hoarsely.

She nodded.

"You go first," he enjoined. "I'll hold you."

It was impossible to walk upright. They had to crawl to

safety upon the narrow path, advancing inch by inch. When the last perilous corner was turned, Tim asked one question, pointing to the gulf below——

"If we had gone over, would you have cared much?"

"I was not afraid of that," she answered gravely.

Yet he had seen fear in her eyes, fear of him and of herself.

"I'm glad we did it," he replied.

V

Next day, another excursion was made to an ancient manor house, once a small feudal castle, which lies upon the banks of a river sheltered by fine trees. The man in charge informed Tim that the property, not a large one, was for sale and mentioned a modest price. This fact quickened the interest of the visitors, for the house and grounds were charming. Otis began a sketch; Mrs. Peronet sat near him, reading; Tim and Daffy explored the garden, which revealed unexpected beauties. Huge rocks covered with moss lay amidst hoary oaks now bursting into full leaf. The storm of the previous day had exhausted itself. A breeze sighed softly in the pines which fringed the higher grounds. Wild flowers carpeted the glades. The river could be seen below, a silvery riband winding towards the sea. The seclusion was absolute. And about the gnarled oaks and rocks lingered mystery. One could conceive of Druidical rites in such a spot. It was haunted by some elusive spirit of the past. Two peasants, a fisherman and a girl, passed Tim and Daffy. They walked side by side, with fingers interlaced, lovers, with a brooding expression upon their brown, impassive faces. The girl wore the pretty costume of Pont-Aven; the man was in faded overalls with a blue beret jauntily aslant upon his head. Tim watched them enviously.

The shadows swallowed them up. Soon they would

emerge upon a stretch of down dotted by gorse bushes blazing yellow in the sun. Then, perhaps, they would stand and talk of what the future might hold, of the house wherein their children would be born, of the boat yet to be built, of the garden to be planted and tended.

Tim and Daffy wandered on. The small domain formed a peninsula, surrounded on three sides by the river which separated it from a fishing hamlet upon the farther shore.

"What a place," said Tim. "I could buy it, if I chose. That's a wonderful thought."

He began to talk of what he could do in such an earthly paradise, sheltered even from the winds of the Atlantic. There was a terrace, with a stone balustrade, running along the façade which faced the river, and in front a cour d'honneur, a miniature affair, but the real thing, once thronged with cavaliers and gay ladies going a-hawking. In the centre was an ancient well with a superb stone top, grotesquely carved. And, inside the château, were two immense stone-vaulted rooms. What a delight to fill them with old Breton furniture and faïence, to panel the walls with sides of chests bought here and there out of the farmhouses! Had Daffy noticed the immense open hearth? Wouldn't it be jolly to sit in front of roaring logs when the winds blew and one could hear the roar of the breakers.

As he talked, his face flushed; his eyes sparkled. Daffy beheld again the ingenuous youth of Little Pennington; she heard his mirthful laugh which had so captivated her long ago. Suddenly he stopped.

"But you would be bored?"

"No, no. Go on! To listen to you is like hearing a dream transposed into words."

The years seemed to have fallen from her; she spoke and looked as the Daffy who had sat with him in the Dell, prattling of a future to be passed with him. Tim said, abruptly:

"The dream might come true."

Silently, she shook her head. He burst out with startling vehemence:

"Why not? Nothing is needed but courage."

She lifted her hands with an imploring gesture. Tim seized her, drawing her towards him, gazing into her face, trying to interpret the expression of eyes which eluded his.

"Courage to flout convention, to seize opportunity, to remake our lives—to—to begin again."

"Tim! You hurt me!"

He released her, but he went on:

"Ah! You are afraid. To give up what you have—it is too much to ask of any woman."

Nettled by the irony in his voice, she retorted quickly:

"Rank is nothing to me—nothing. And I am rich enough in my own right. How dare you misunderstand me?"

He smiled; she was angry, the dear creature; therefore she loved him. Otherwise she would have laughed.

"Daffy, what stands between us and the happiness which we could give each other?"

"I cannot answer you, Tim."

"You mean you won't."

"The question will be answered, but not by me."

She spoke with a restraint that imposed itself subtly upon his quick intelligence.

"Can I answer it?"

"Only you. But not here or now."

"Then—when? And where?"

She drew herself up, standing erect before him, faintly smiling. Her dignity confounded him, for love glowed in her eyes.

He was about to speak, but she entreated silence with a gesture, continuing softly: "I have never doubted your love for me, not even in that dreary bitter hour when I learned from my mother why you had left England."

"You are wonderful."

"I think women who love truly are like that. We were very young, little more than children, but age has nothing to do with love. I shall love you when I am old, Tim."

"If you feel that, come to me."

"I am not afraid of the world's censure. I could sacrifice my good name for your sake, but if I came to you—now, you, not I, would be leaping into the dark, into shadows."

"But this is mystery."

"It is indeed, because the mystery lies thick upon you, not me. I cannot see you clearly yet. I can see the boy, not the man. An ordeal lies before you, an experience through which you must pass. When it is over, when your eyes are opened, come back to me. I make no pledges, but what is best in me, which recognises what is best in you, dares me to put you to the proof. If you should fail, if you should not rise to your full stature, to the manhood which I have prayed might be yours, why then, Tim, I might do what you ask, for God knows that your need of me would be tremendous."

"What is this ordeal?"

"I want you to go to Little Pennington, to see your father."

"But why?"

"He will answer that question in his own way and at his own time. Will you go?"

"Yes, but I shall come back to you."

CHAPTER II

JACK

I

TIM left Concarneau some two days later. Upon the very eve of his departure arrived the draft from California. He shewed it triumphantly to Otis, who entreated him to invest it in gilt-edged securities. Tim mentioned the ancient château, but Otis ridiculed such a bargain.

"Cost you a small fortune to do it up," he remarked.

"That's where the fun would come in."

"But, hang it! you couldn't live there alone."

To this Tim vouchsafed no reply.

Daffy and Mrs. Peronet left Concarneau with Tim, but he parted from them at Quimper, where the ladies were passing the night. Apart from his promise to Daffy, he wished to arrive in London upon the day when *Dust* was published. And he wished, also, to travel through Paris, for the portrait of Alethea had passed the jury (thanks to Cabral's influence) and was already hung. Tim, however, had lost interest in it. Nevertheless, such a small triumph counted. In Paris, he saw his picture, high above the line, and spent a joyous evening with Briand and Cabral. Certainly the luck had changed. Cabral said emphatically:

"Tu as de la veine, toi!"

He arrived in London upon the 28th of April, refusing to wait for the opening of the Salon. He put up at the Cecil Hotel, dined well, and went to the play. At eleven, the next morning, he called upon Broad, who shewed him his literary first-born, swathed in blue, a promising-looking infant. He

told the publisher that a Breton novel was on the stocks, and Broad expressed a wish to publish it.

Thanks to his influence with the powerful editor of a morning paper, a review of the novel appeared upon the day of publication. Tim read the following:

> We welcome warmly a sincere piece of work from the pen of a new writer, entitled *Dust*. Most assuredly it has penetrating qualities; and we confess that it affected eyes which we believed to be dust-proof. Mr. Grey is to be congratulated upon a notable achievement. He transports us to California, to a foothill ranch upon which he must have lived and loved and suffered. It is quite impossible to treat this novel as mere fiction. We venture to affirm it to be autobiographical, a faithful record of life in a land of sunshine during an extended period of drought. With practice Mr. Grey may learn to write with greater ease and distinction; he may acquire the tricks and *clichés* of his trade happily absent from the present narrative; he may become—we warn him of this in all good faith—a popular caterer to a large public; for we find in this first book possibilities adumbrating alike triumph and disaster. We do not know Mr. Grey personally, but we see clearly in the author of *Dust* two personalities, the artist, with a delightful appreciation of the rhythm and colour of life, with a trained or innate recognition of "values," and, sharply contrasted, the man of business too concerned with dramatic incident, too heedless of psychology. If Mr. Grey achieves success, which of these two personalities will become the dominant partner? It has been said that business instinct underlies artistic triumphs, but we are unconvinced of this. We cling to the belief that the best work is accomplished by those who are concerned altogether with that work, concentrating undivided energies upon it, with no eye lifted to behold the effect on others, with no ear cocked for the applause of the groundlings, with no hand open to clutch the largesse of Fortune. We advise our readers to buy *Dust*, to read it carefully, and to re-read it.

"That's rather jolly, isn't it?" said Tim, looking straight at Broad, who was lying back in a comfortable chair. He liked Broad, because the great man had not kept him cooling his heels in a fusty waiting-room. Lasher cursed that detestable cooling process and the complacent arrogance of rich publishers who enthroned themselves high above impoverished poets. Broad, however, belonged to the old-fashioned school. He was editor of a literary magazine, and agreeably saturated with its traditions; he wore gracefully the mantle of an illustrious predecessor; his manner would have disarmed a nervous school-girl. And the room in which he received his authors was historical, a fine, lofty, Georgian chamber, thickly carpeted, lined with books in glazed mahogany cases.

"It's handsome," said Broad. He went on comfortably:

"It will sell many copies. The advance sales, of course, have been negligible, but the orders will come in. Oh, yes, they will come in. A good slating, a long column of abuse would be a capital 'ad.' Prepare yourself for that, Mr. White."

"I'm not thin-skinned," said Tim cheerfully. "A portrait I have done is hung fairly well in the Salon. The critics will slate that. I don't mind."

He laughed, throwing back his head. Broad laughed with him, although he said seriously:

"You paint as well?"

"I've chucked painting. That was pot-boiling. This isn't, thank the Lord!"

"I'm glad to hear you say so. A portrait in the Salon! You are a fortunate young man."

"Young? Oh, no."

"Not much more than thirty, I take it?"

"Nearly thirty-six."

"Well, you don't look it. Can you do as your reviewer suggests—give undivided energies to literary work?"

"Yes; I have independent means, enough for my modest wants."

"That's quite as it should be. Let me add this without prejudice. *Dust* deals with California, and the book you have on the blocks concerns itself, so you say, with Brittany. But, if you wish to make a supreme appeal to our public, you must write about England and the English. There are notable exceptions to this general rule, but my advice you will find is sound. Will you dine with me?"

"I am leaving London to-morrow morning."

"Come to-night."

"You are very kind."

Broad named a famous club. Tim left his office, conscious of a thrilling sense of elation. The draft from California lay snug in his pocket-book; his picture hung in the Salon; his book was on the eve of publication; and Daffy loved him.

But why had she imposed this ordeal, and what was its nature? Never had he been so completely mystified. Two thoughts obsessed him: the knowledge that she loved him, and her conviction that some strange experience through which he must pass would keep them apart instead of bringing them together. Crossing from Saint Malo he had endeavoured to analyse her mind and his own. Did she believe that the influences of the happy village would prevail against an all-consuming passion? Surely she was too clever, too experienced, and too ardent to weave ropes out of such sand? And so far as she was concerned, any reluctance he might have felt in tempting her to leave her husband was dispelled by the knowledge that her married life had been cruelly disappointing and unhappy. Avidly, he swallowed details from Alice Peronet. Rokeby was unfaithful, an animal, and unkind. Practically, husband and wife lived apart. Everybody knew it. Tim could envisage himself as Perseus. And he had a notion that the widowed sage so regarded him. Certainly she was no stickler for convention, no upholder of outworn creeds and frayed formulas. Nevertheless, she dwelt too insistently upon Daffy's good-

ness and nobility of character, and her farewell to Tim had been significant.

"Au revoir, mon preux chevalier."

Why did she call him a preux chevalier? Was she ironic? Or, more consoling reflection, did she acclaim him as Perseus?

In this befogged condition of mind, he approached Little Pennington, walking across the Downs from Winchester, sending on his portmanteau in a fly.

II

The Vicar was expecting him, but Tim had not mentioned a particular train, having a reasonable fear that he might be met at the station. Fancy urged him to walk into the Vicarage and hang his cap upon the old peg. The Vicar would come out of his study, holding out both hands with the familiar smile and gesture which Tim remembered so well. Thus the ice would be broken; and they would slide at once into an easy intimacy.

When Tim came to the point whence the spire of Little Pennington church may be first seen he halted, gazing about him. He perceived no changes. The yews looked smaller, a pond by the road, where some sheep were watering, appeared to have shrunk. In fine, the landscape, as a whole, presented the features of a delicate miniature rather than a picture.

"I am bigger," thought Tim.

He sat upon a gate, filling his pipe, staring about him with a faintly ironical smile. Presently, he made a grimace, shrugging his broad shoulders. What effect would the shattering of the Seventh Commandment exercise upon the Vicar? This question worried Tim; but he consoled himself with the reflection that Rokeby would divorce his wife, and that marriage would adjust the situation in the kinder eyes of age and wisdom. With advancing years, the Vicar,

surely, had discarded some too rigid and exacting conventions. But had he? In an odd way, the familiar surroundings raised this question. The neatly trimmed fences, the carefully cultivated fields, even the smug appearance of the sheep, and, above all, the slender spire, indicated the absence of change. He had changed. Little Pennington remained the same.

Tim smoked his pipe too fast with scant enjoyment. The spirit of his old home entered once more into possession.

He felt—what? Afraid? Why did he shrink from taking the last few steps which lay between him and the Vicar? Why did the desire to turn tail afflict him?

"I'll fight this out," he thought.

It was a matter of pride that he could face facts, and deal with them masterfully. The moment had come to which he had looked forward. He, the outcast, was returning, as he had wished to return, a self-supporting, independent man. After a weary quest, he had found himself. He knew—rare accomplishment!—what he wanted. Would he exchange positions with some magnate of the India Civil Service? Did he envy, as he had done, some many-acred squire sitting serene in ancestral halls? Such boyish ambitions had passed. He could wonder at the fatuity which entertained them. What a dire punishment it would be if men were constrained by Fate to dwell in the castles built by youthful Fancy! From the consideration and enumeration of his assets—high health, a moderate fortune, a reasonable anticipation of fame, and the love of a dear woman —Tim turned to compute his disabilities. What he had done would be esteemed by the Vicar of no account, a tale of talents wilfully hidden, if he broke a Divine Law.

This was the ordeal which Daffy had adumbrated so mysteriously. She had foreseen the necessity of his meeting the Vicar and accepting his hand in love and friendship, holding out in return a hand about to impose a blow. Nevertheless, this solution of a perplexing problem was too obvious. There must be some factor as yet unperceived. Why had she im-

posed this meeting? Resentment kindled, as he realised the falseness of his position, the hypocrisies that it must impose.

"Shall I go back?" he muttered.

He wriggled uneasily, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, staring at them, sensible that every action, however negligible, had definite meaning upon this eventful day. Were his triumphs turning into ashes?

If he went back without meeting the Vicar, what would Daffy say? Would he shrink in her faithful eyes to mean proportions?

Yes; that was inevitable. Out of pity, she might take what was left of a man; and the memory of his cowardice would poison happiness.

He must accomplish the odious task which she had imposed.

III

He passed some children, carrying garlands. A little girl shyly offered a nosegay of cowslips. Tim said:

"Thank you very much. What is your name, my dear?"

"I be Daisy Judd."

Two more questions revealed that she was the daughter of Journey. To her astonishment, Tim picked up the maid and kissed her. When he set her down he slipped half a sovereign into her fat little hand.

"Can you give your father a message?"

She nodded.

"Tell him that his old friend, Mr. Tim, is coming to see him. Can you remember that?"

She replied triumphantly:

"I can say the names of the kings of Israel."

"Where do you live, Daisy?"

She told him, scampering off to join the others. Tim thought of the Cherub, as he passed through the Lych-gate, and entered the churchyard. His eyes rested upon a new

white marble cross, conspicuous for its size. He read the inscription upon it. This was the grave of Daffy's mother. The cross had been erected by Annie, the wife of the suffragan bishop. He read a text—

Her children shall rise up and call her blessed!

Tim lingered by the grave, uncovering his head. Then he moved on to the grim mausoleum which held the bones of the departed Penningtons. Hard by was the tomb of the poet and prophet. Upon it lay two wreaths. Tim stood beside it listening to the cawing of the rooks, inhaling the odours of Spring, the mingled fragrance of flowers and herbs. From the forge across the village street came the sharp clang of hammer upon anvil; hens were clucking in the gardens behind the cottages; blackbirds were chattering in the Vicarage shrubbery.

The door of the church stood open. Tim looked in. An old woman was kneeling near the font at which, doubtless, she had been baptised. Her pale, withered face seemed extraordinarily peaceful. With a shock Tim recognised her as the wife of one of the lodge-keepers, whom he had left a comely woman of fifty. Nothing could have served to emphasise more poignantly the flight of years than this great change in a person once full of energy and strength, now aged and infirm. He glanced at the pew in which he had sat Sunday after Sunday listening to the Vicar's silvery voice. Against that pillar his old friend, the Colonel, would lean his broad back and doze off if the sermon failed to keep him awake. Upon the left of the main aisle, where the women sat, Tim saw the red hassock which belonged to Miss Janetta Vanburgh. Had time chastened the acerbity of her "Amen"? Under the pulpit was Mary Nightingale's seat.

He left the church profoundly melancholy, quickening his steps as he entered the Vicarage garden, knowing that the Vicar might see him, if he happened to be sitting at his desk. The study windows were wide open. Above the path, upon sloping ground to the left of the house, was the

lawn and a great over-shadowing cedar. The Vicar might be there. In fine weather he drank tea just outside the dining-room. Tim's heart began to beat, as he saw a figure in a chair. But the figure wore grey flannel. Some stranger, then, was staying at the Vicarage. What an exasperating mischance! Yes; the stranger was a young man, who seemed to make himself at home. He was reading, with his feet at ease upon another chair. In just a position, perhaps in the same chair, Tim had struggled with the idioms of Aristophanes. By the young man's side stood a small table with books upon it, which had the appearance of text-books. Tim jumped to the conclusion that the Vicar had a pupil. He consigned the youth to perdition, as he rounded the corner, and approached the front door.

IV

"My boy! My dear, dear boy!"

"Father!"

There was no mistaking the Vicar's emotion, as he held Tim's hands and gazed eagerly into his eyes. For a moment Tim, too, remained speechless, forgetting everything except the pressure of those hands and the welcome in the quiet voice. Then they surveyed each other with anxious scrutiny, whilst the Vicar's hands rested upon Tim's shoulders. They were alone in the study. Tim perceived that his guardian had become an old man, still erect, with eyes which had lost neither fire nor penetration, but white-haired, wrinkled, too thin, too pale, a sublimated presentment of his former self. He could not doubt that the Vicar's time on earth must necessarily be brief; and he felt a pang of anger because Daffy had not prepared him for such a grievous change. Then he remembered that Tertius White was seventy, and that he went about his work in all weathers regardless of personal comfort where the comfort of others might be concerned.

They sat down; the Vicar gently pressed Tim into the armchair facing the window, seating himself upon the Windsor chair upon which Tim had wriggled so uneasily as a boy.

"I want to look at my—son."

"Am I changed much?"

"You are a strong man; but I see the boy." He lifted his fine head, adding quietly: "I thank God."

Tim remained silent, ravaged by remorse. He ought to have come home before. Vanity, false shame, false pride, had prevented him. He realised this intensely, flushing beneath those keen kind eyes. And he said as much with a feeling which brought an answering flush into the Vicar's cheeks.

"You are here. I understand; I have waited patiently, knowing the bitter-sweetness of this meeting. The bitterness has passed, has it not?"

"Yes," Tim answered humbly, for any petty feeling of triumph seemed to have oozed from him, clearing his vision, so that he saw for the first time his true relation to the man who had given so much and asked for so little.

The Vicar began to speak of Tim's work, rejoicing so simply and sincerely in his small success that Tim found himself answering in choked monosyllables. He wanted to escape for a few minutes, to recover his self-control, to measure—if he could—the confounding sense of disintegration which this meeting had wrought so swiftly and unexpectedly. He had pictured himself cool and at ease, speaking fluently of the past and the future, making good! Instead, he was writhing beneath an intolerable humiliation.

He stood up.

"I must go out," he faltered. "This has been too much for me."

"Yes; yes."

Tim fled into the garden. The Vicar remained for a

moment staring at the picture of Tim's mother. Then he knelt down.

V

Tim passed through the dining-room, and on to the lawn, oblivious of the stranger whom he had condemned as an intruder a few minutes before. The youth heard him coming, and jumped up with a smile upon his face. Tim stared at him, as the boy said pleasantly:

"You are Mr. White? Are you looking for the Vicar?"

Tim hesitated. To pass a guest in his father's house without a word would be churlish. He said awkwardly:

"I have just seen him."

The boy nodded, continuing joyously:

"How splendid! We have talked of nothing else, ever since we heard that you were coming. It wasn't too much for him, was it?"

The sympathy in his voice challenged Tim's attention. Obviously, his first guess had been the right one. This nice young fellow was a pupil and a friend. The mere tone of the "we" established that. Tim replied confusedly:

"It was too much for me."

The boy nodded.

"I should jolly well think so—after sixteen years!"

Tim dropped into a chair. The boy's prattle soothed him. Perhaps he dreaded being alone with his thoughts.

Also, something quite indefinable about the boy, something familiar and yet unfamiliar, provoked his curiosity. Was he a Pennington? Or some kinsman of the Vicar's? But he asked no questions, listening half absently to the joyous voice rattling on:

"We got ready your old room. Have you seen it? No. We collected your books. I had some of 'em in my room. And to-morrow there's to be a sort of feast. The Vicar has asked half the village to tea. Mr. Hazel is as excited as anybody. And Benner. And Judd. After breakfast this

morning we went down into the cellar. There are one or two bottles of the famous Pennington Madeira left. I say, I'm not making myself a nuisance, am I? Of course, you don't know me, but I know you, because everybody has talked to me about you. I dare say you want to be quiet. Shall I hook it?"

"No. My father and you seem to be friends."

"Rather. He's been ripping to me."

"Has he? Suppose you tell me who you are. Introduce yourself in form."

To Tim's astonishment, the boy looked embarrassed. The light died out of his eyes. He said hesitatingly:

"Then he has never written to you about—me?"

"Never."

"He took me out of an orphanage, Mr. White. If you don't mind, I'd sooner you asked him. I—I don't know very much about myself."

Tim said hastily:

"Then you live here?"

"Yes. This has been my home for ten years."

Tim was astounded. Why had the Vicar never mentioned this boy in his letters? He examined him more attentively, with an odd but unmistakable jealousy. Evidently, this orphan had taken his place. He frowned, and then a more generous emotion banished both frown and jealousy. The boy had brought youth and mirth to this empty house. He had cheered the Vicar's solitude.

"What does my father call you?"

"Jack."

"Shake!" said Tim.

In silence they gripped hands. The boy was tall and fair, singularly alert, a personality. It was strange that Daffy had never spoken of him. As he held the boy's hand, Tim asked a question:

"Have you met Lady Rokeby?"

Jack's eyes sparkled; the joyous smile came back.

"Oh, yes; she's a ripper too!"

Tim thought that he could interpret Daffy's silence in regard to this attractive youth. In a sense he had supplanted an absent son, filled a void in an old man's heart. The fear of wounding a friend accounted adequately for Daffy's reserve. Tim rose out of his chair, feeling cramped. He told himself that a walk round the village would restore his circulation.

"Look here, Jack. I want to stretch my legs. Come along!"

"Are you sure you want me, sir?"

"Quite sure. Go on talking about my father."

His heart was warming towards the young fellow; he eyed him with increasing approval, marking an air of distinction and a delightful absence of swagger. And he knew also that Jack was eager to please him, that he had captivated the youth, whose jolly grin would serve as a passport commending the owner to most strangers. It would be easy to elicit information from such an ingenuous source, the details which Daffy had withheld for reasons which still perplexed him. He took the boy's arm, pressing it genially, delighted to feel that he was himself again, that a balance badly shaken had regained its normal equilibrium. Certainly, the Vicar had exhibited perspicacity in selecting this orphan. And how like him to pick a bit of fine clay plastic to his hand. His thoughts swooped farther afield. This, undoubtedly, was the Vicar's second great experiment. Had he yearned for a triumph which might obliterate the memory of a failure? And if this boy should prove a failure——!

Whilst these reflections were jostling each other in his mind, he asked lightly:

"And my father's health?"

The boy answered gravely:

"Oh, sir, he doesn't take enough care of himself. But now he will listen to you. I am sure of that."

"Why?" He was amused by the confident tone. Jack hesitated, saying shyly:

"You look as if you could get people to do what you want."

"Do I? Well, I shall endeavour to satisfy your expectations. He is terribly frail."

"He is seventy-one, sir."

"I know—I know, but is there anything organically wrong? You understand me?"

"He works too hard; and he eats too little. That's what the doctor says."

"The doctor? Does he come regularly?"

"Oh, no. He drops in now and again. He told me to keep an eye on him, to spare him as much as possible. But it's not easy for me," his voice betrayed anxiety, "because he hates being fussed over. Perhaps he would stand some coddling from you."

"I wonder," murmured Tim. "I noticed your books—that confounded Liddell and Scott, the same one I used. Is he cramming you for any exam?"

"Yes; for the India Civil."

The reply smote Tim. Now he knew, now he understood, the veil between himself and the Vicar dissolved. This jolly, quick-witted boy had indeed stepped into his empty shoes, and into the place which had been his in the parson's house and heart. It was the boy, not the grown man, who was destined to justify Tertius White's creed, his fervent belief that good prevailed. Tim said hoarsely, wondering whether he betrayed the emotion surging within him:

"Are you keen?"

"Keen! Oh, yes, I'm frightfully keen, but I'm not half as clever as you, sir. I crawl—so the Vicar says—where you pranced along. But he thinks I shall pass. And it's such a splendid service, such opportunities——!"

"Opportunities for what, Jack?"

But he divined that the boy's answer would be quite other than what he would have replied. He could hear himself saying to Daffy in the Dell: "It means four hundred a year and perks—it means *you.*" The very words

leapt out of some hiding-place in his memory, as he heard the boy's eager tones—

"The Vicar has told me how badly men are wanted, of what has been done by the right sort. Lawrence and all the others. What a field! What——"

He broke off, flushing and faltering. Tim found it disconcerting to interpret this embarrassment. The boy knew that Tim White had been trained, as he had been, for work in this field, and had then forsaken it.

"I see. You have remembered that I didn't go to India. Do you know why?"

"I don't, sir."

Jack spoke with that unmistakable sincerity which evokes sincerity from others. Without pausing to pick his phrases, Tim muttered:

"I made a mess of things, you understand." And then, with a vehemence which surprised his listener, he gripped the arm within his own, saying: "I may tell you about that when we get better acquainted. It's a nasty story. It—it jumps out of the past, my boy, and hits me in the eye—to-day. But *you* won't make a mess of things. *You'll* pass?"

"I hope so."

They had reached the village forge, where George Chalk the blacksmith, was shoeing a great brown mare.

"It's Mr. Tim!"

"How are you, George?"

"Lard ha' mercy on us! I'd ha' known 'ee anywheres. Parson told me you was expected. 'Tis a joyful day for him, dear man!"

Yes; the parson had kept his memory green in Little Pennington.

"Home-along at last," said George. "Ah! we missed 'ee rarely, yes, we did. Full o' life, you was, Mr. Tim. I be married this many a year now. I married Everannie Bunce. You ain't forgotten Everannie? Not you! Mother o'

seven! Come over to the house, Mr. Tim, and taste her currant wine."

Jack nudged Tim's arm.

"I say, sir, shall I nip back and fetch the Vicar? He wouldn't miss this for the world."

Tim nodded.

"We'll go back to him together."

CHAPTER III

ILLUMINATION

I

A PLEASANT pilgrimage followed. But when Jack and Tim stood together upon the threshold of the study, Tim became aware of a look upon the Vicar's face. Wonder informed its quiet serenity and an austere gratification.

"We two have made friends," said Tim. At the moment he felt intensely grateful to this boy, beholding him as the crutch of declining years, the Benjamin who had filled Joseph's place. If bitterness lay beneath such a recognition, if belated remorse for an absence too protracted cut deep into his sensibilities, if he beheld himself shrunk to truer proportions, he could yet rise above such melancholy thoughts and rejoice.

The three set forth upon a round of visits, whither we need not follow them. Jack, the acolyte, remained in the background; but Tim was strangely sensible of his presence, conscious that in some mysterious fashion the boy had to be there, a necessary eyewitness, an inevitable corollary. Obviously, too, Jack was welcome for himself. Watching him, Tim could touch with prehensile, sensitive fingers his own youth, and compute the effect of youth upon age, its appeal, its allurement. And in Jack he could see the Cherub as he might have been, the Cherub grown into just such a tall, fair, slender boy. There was a look about the eyes, something in the shape of the head, in the modelling of the chin, which seemed to raise his little son from the dead.

And it never occurred to him that there might be more than coincidence in this fleeting, elusive resemblance.

II

Presently, he found himself alone in his bedroom. He sat down upon the bed, staring at the pictures on the wall. There were groups taken at Eton, framed photographs by Hills and Saunders embellished with the College arms, the "twenty-two" cap upon a nail, the school-books; and in a cupboard the bat which he had hoped to wield at Lord's. Above the mantel-piece grinned the mask of a fox killed in the open. Tim had ridden one of Sir Gilbert's horses, which carried him stoutly. And beside the mask hung a fine steel-engraving of the Squire, taken from the famous portrait by Richmond. Just opposite was the still finer mezzotint of the poet and prophet. The two friends seemed to be smiling at each other. As a boy Tim had never appreciated these portraits. How amazing! What revealing documents!

Time sped by as Tim sat upon his bed. He dressed hastily and went down to dinner as if he were in a dream. But it is truer to say that he had penetrated through the surface of things to zones of his own being hitherto unplumbed. A strange fear of himself gripped him, a curious contempt for the outer man warped by circumstance, parti-coloured—white, green, brown and black. Had some essential part remained unchanged and unstained?

After dinner the famous Madeira produced its effect. Tim talked of California. The Vicar listened, lying back in his chair, leaning his head upon his hand; Jack sat bolt upright, now and again moving restlessly, as the spirit of adventure clawed at his vitals. No story-teller could have found a better audience than these two, the old man whose work was nearly done, the youth with the world stretching wide before his eager, shining eyes. Tim warmed into

speech, talking as he used to talk to the pilgrims when he showed them land upon the Santa Margarita. The Vicar remembered Rupert Carteret and his torrens dicendi copia, which swept all before it. And yet this stirring recital of actions and reactions in a new, wild country obscured rather than revealed the speaker. He wanted to see Tim clearly, and a flood of words submerged him. Tim's letters had been like this, a recital of happenings, interesting because they were true, because they illuminated conditions so different from those to which a country parson was accustomed, but of the effect upon the character of the protagonist no soul-satisfying glimpse had been vouchsafed.

It was late when Tim finished, too late for a talk alone with the Vicar, who looked tired, almost exhausted. Tim lit a candle, handing it to his father with a remorseful—

"I have worn you out."

The Vicar smiled, shaking his head.

"It has been a memorable day. To-morrow after breakfast, while Jack is wrestling with his Greek, we two will spend an hour together. Good-night, my dear son."

He ascended the stairs slowly, looking back twice to nod affectionately. When the bedroom door closed behind him, Tim said:

"How slowly he went up!"

"Yes; he gets breathless very easily. Shall I put out the lights, sir?"

Tim started. The words carried him back seventeen years. Some inflection of the boy's voice, a subtle tone, brought Ivy Jellicoe out of the mists of the past. Deliberately he had banished her from his thoughts. For ten years there had been no mention of her or her child in the Vicar's letters. After Tim's marriage, when there was money to spare, he had offered to provide for Ivy and the child; but the Vicar had replied rather curtly, saying that this was unnecessary. Jack repeated the words:

"Shall I put out the lights, sir?"

"Yes, do! Good-night, my boy."

"Good-night, sir. It was awfully exciting listening to you. I simply loved it."

They shook hands; and Jack may have wondered why the man so fluent a few minutes before, so gay, so impetuous, had become of a sudden grave and impassive. He accounted easily for the change. This big, strong son was worried and unhappy about a father's health. He said shyly:

"It will be all right now you've come back. He never said much, but he wanted you most awfully."

Tim went upstairs.

III

He sat down by the open window and lit a pipe. Rain had fallen during the evening. From the moist earth ascended those vernal odours which stir the memory. Tim loved this rich, satisfying fragrance, emanation from a grateful, teeming soil. He could recall a night in California, when he stood bareheaded in his garden, letting the rain soak to his skin, waiting for this revivifying experience, this titillating sensation, so significant to dwellers in a land of drought. But now he was thinking not of California, but of rain-drenched bracken in a copse near Lanterton, where a boy stood impatiently expecting a girl. He could see her flitting through the trees, glancing to right and left, fear upon her pretty face, as she hastened to her lover. It all came back vividly, his tormenting thoughts about the future; her provoking, careless acceptance of the present, clouded for her by a passing shower, and joyously brightened by a box of chocolates.

Where was Ivy now? Where was her child?

Then he told himself, wonderingly, that the child must be a young man. How astounding! Why had he so forgotten the flight of time?

Ivy had come to this room, at this very hour, so fate-

ful for her and him, so pregnant, had he known it at the time, with incalculable possibilities. The key which he had silently turned still lay in the lock. The turning of it had cut him off from Daffy.

"Shall I put out the lights, sir?"

He stared into the darkness. Heavy clouds impended, but a few stars twinkled between them. Ivy faded out of his mind. He beheld Jack; he heard Jack's voice with that odd inflection, so familiar, so insistent.

Then everything became dazzlingly clear.

Jack was Ivy's son—his son—his flesh and blood!

"Oh, my God!" he exclaimed. "Oh, my God, my God!"

He began to pace up and down the room, unable as yet to apprehend details, conscious only of this fierce, glaring, blinding illumination, as if he were alone a burning atom in illimitable space.

Doubt assailed him for a few minutes. He opened the door. Jack's room lay next to his. He listened. The boy's breathing could be heard. He must have been asleep for nearly an hour. Tim opened Jack's door very quietly. If the boy awoke, he had an excuse pat upon his tongue. But the boy slept soundly, tired after an exciting day. Tim fetched a candle, discarding his shoes. He stole silently to the bedside, shading the candle with his hand.

Jack lay upon his side, with a tousled head curled into a bare arm. So the Cherub had slept. So Tim had slept when a boy. The last doubt vanished. This was indeed Ivy's son and his. The boy had inherited Ivy's dark lashes, and the delicate modelling of her cheeks. The wide forehead, the thick hair growing forward at the temples, the thin, sensitive nostrils came from Tim. The bed-clothes were half-flung back, displaying a broad chest.

"You are mine," said Tim, "my son, my only son."

He returned to his room.

IV

Throughout that night he kept vigil with thoughts,—for the first time, perhaps, focussed upon others. If there be any truth in the dictum that if you wish to change a man's character you must change his point of view, why, then, the character of Tim became changed between midnight and dawn upon the second of May. During five hours he stood outside himself, or outside his conscious self, for many might contend that the soul of the man looked down upon body and mind. Here we wade into deep waters, and will leave them.

Whatever faults were his, and they have not been hidden in this narrative, no one had ever charged Tim with cowardice. Physical courage may or may not be reckoned a king virtue. Often it degenerates into recklessness; often it soars into the empyrean of purest altruism, as when a man deliberately risks his life to save another. Tim, we know, was capable of either contingency; he had sunk and he had soared. Now he was poised between the two poles, confronted by consequence, compelled to pass judgment upon what he had done and left undone.

And the arresting figure in his quickened intelligence, the man—to use an expression of the theatre—who "held the stage," was the Vicar. From Tim's earliest childhood till the present hour that personality revealed itself with absolute clarity and distinction. Quarrel as you might with the Vicar's creed, indict—as Tim had often done—a code of ethics too rigid for most erring mortals, the result shone out with a divine radiance. Tertius White had consecrated a long life to the service of others; he had shouldered their burdens and responsibilities; and he had imposed no conditions.

Nevertheless, the conditions remained to be self-imposed by the man who had most profited by this altruism. For

thirty-five years the debt had been steadily swelling. To-night it must be computed to the uttermost farthing.

Tim felt as if he were bleeding to death inside, the death which precedes the higher life. He knew that the Vicar had passed through this disintegration before he, Tim, was born.

"Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened unless it die."

The text, out of the Burial Service, which he had never attempted to understand, came into his mind, a straw for a drowning man to clutch at. But he was thinking of the Vicar, not of himself, repeating again and again: "He must have died. And then he lived—for my mother's sake, for mine, and for my boy's."

He had never envied the saint till this moment. How gladly now would he change places with him. How small and petty were the ends for which he had worked.

Thus he sat beside the open window, bowed and broken, gazing into the darkness, waiting for the dawn. When the first silvery shafts quivered faintly in the eastern horizon, he took off his clothes, got into bed, and slept.

V

At breakfast, Tim displayed outwardly no sign of vigils. His skin was too tanned by wind and sun to look pale. An outsider might have thought that the Vicar, not he, had lain awake for many hours, but the Vicar, it seemed, had slept soundly. He read prayers in the same quiet, impressive voice; he ate his egg and a thin rasher of bacon; he drank one cup of tea. When Jack went reluctantly to his Greek, the Vicar took Tim's arm and led him into the study. By this time Tim had regained self-control; he knew that any excitement would react disastrously upon his father; he told himself that he must be calm for an old man's sake. But, as soon as they were alone, he said quietly:

"I have guessed who Jack is; I have spent the night thinking of what you have done for me."

The Vicar said nervously:

"And wondering why I kept it secret?"

"Yes, I did wonder at that."

"I'll try to explain, Tim. The boy was born in London. You had my promise that I would look after the mother. I did so to the best of my ability." He sighed, continuing slowly: "It was not easy. Very soon I discovered that the child was neglected, not wilfully, but through ignorance and carelessness. The mother jumped at my suggestion that Jack should be placed in a home. Then I got her a respectable place. She left it; I found her another. I—I did my best, but she drifted on to the streets."

Tim groaned.

"I tried again and again," the Vicar continued mournfully; "others tried, too. She never went near the child. Well, I can understand that."

"Looking at him now, I can't."

"The maternal instinct seemed to be lacking. When the boy was five years old, I heard of your marriage. I began to abandon the hope of seeing you. My thoughts dwelt persistently upon the child. The scandal in the village had died a natural death. When I brought Jack here, under the name of John Southwark—the orphanage was in Southwark—nobody suspected that he was yours."

"Nobody?"

"Except Daphne Rokeby. She guessed; she saw a faint likeness; I often see it; and then I told her."

"Does Jack know about his mother?"

"He knows nothing; when the right time comes, you will tell him."

"Heavens! For ten years you have fathered my son, as you fathered me."

"I did it gladly. I kept it secret from you for two reasons: you were far away and I wanted you to see

the boy first. The other reason was more subtle. I desired passionately to test my own faith in the ultimate triumph of good over evil. There is much good in your son, Tim. I speak of what I know."

"What can I say—what can I say?"

"Tell me frankly what you think of him?"

"He is a son that any father might be proud of; and he owes everything—as I do—to you. I can think of nothing else except that—his debt and mine to you."

"Tim, the boy has paid in full. He is very dear to me, not dearer than you; that would be impossible, but the care of him has been no burden, only a pleasure."

"Where is the mother now?"

"Alas! I can't tell you. She slipped through my fingers. For a time she prospered, because she was so pretty, and she had engaging ways. From what I saw of her, I could understand how greatly you must have been tempted. I sometimes hope that she is dead."

Tim covered his face; when he looked up again, the Vicar hardly recognised him, so ravaged was he by emotion and remorse. He said hoarsely:

"I came back blown out with conceit. Daffy made me come. She warned me that I must pass through an ordeal. Father," his voice shook, "I'm not fit to go down on my knees and kiss your boots! I feel like a pricked bladder. You must give me time to recover, time to understand you, and this boy, and myself."

"Yes, yes; take all the time you need, Tim."

They sat on together, in an intimacy which seemed to increase as the Vicar talked about the boy. Tim, in his turn, spoke of Magdalena and the Cherub. Then he fetched his book, watching the Vicar's face when he turned to the dedicatory page, hearing the pleased exclamation when he read his own name. They went for a stroll in Pennington Park, passing the great empty house, soon to become the home of a stranger. The Vicar began to talk of Sir

Gilbert, of the long years during which they had worked together. At the end he said:

"He had faith in you, Tim. Just before he died, when we may believe that the spirit of prophecy must inform such a man, he whispered to me that you would come back; he counselled me to wait patiently."

As he spoke he leaned upon Tim's arm, an eloquent appeal of age and infirmity to a strong man. And beneath that kindly pressure Tim felt his relaxed moral fibres stiffening into ropes of steel binding him closer and closer to this generous creditor. He exclaimed derisively:

"I thought that I had made good."

"You have, my dear son, you have."

"Not yet," said Tim.

VI

The afternoon came, and with it the Vicar's guests, Hazel, Benner, Mary Nightingale, the Colonel, the village doctor and a round score of cottagers. Journey was there, a stout fellow, humorously alive to the fact that he had profited "by losing of his prayers."

"I be quite happy now," he assured Tim. "Little Pennington is home to me, Mr. Tim, and has been this many a year. When I heard how nigh you come to bein' hanged, I did think to meself that a live saddler in Hampsheer might be better off than a dead gentleman in Californy."

"You heard the tale of the lynching?"

Journey said proudly:

"The Vicar read us bits o' your letters, Mr. Tim. That's how we kept in touch with 'ee. He just made up his mind, seemingly, that you warn't to be forgotten. Lard A'mighty! I be glad to see 'ee for your own sake, and gladder still for his."

After tea, Tim had a word with the doctor.

"How is my father?" he asked.

The doctor tried to evade giving a candid answer.

"He's getting along in years, Tim. Bless my soul! how they do spin by—even in Little Pennington."

Tim was seldom irritable with his friends, although a habit of getting exasperated with himself was slowly forming; he said incisively:

"Are his arteries thickening? Is there any lesion of the heart? Any degeneration?"

This terminology, acquired from Wason, served to remind the doctor that Tim himself was older. He replied in a different tone:

"It's like this. He is very frail. You can see that; and the sort of man who goes till he drops. He might go at any moment, for there *is* cardiac weakness. But, with care, he may live for another ten years. He is singularly free from the petty ailments of old age. He doesn't suffer from rheumatism or dyspepsia. The machine is wearing out, that's all."

"Thank you," said Tim gravely.

"I meant to speak to you. Exposure or shock would be probably fatal."

"Yes, I understand."

"I'm glad you've come home, Tim. You will keep an eye on him. He's a rare bit, eh?"

"He is, indeed."

"Do you find him much changed? I'm not speaking of his appearance."

Tim was unable to answer this question. The doctor went on:—

"His sermons now. They are more than straws to indicate the change I hint at. In the old days, if one dared to criticize—and I'll own that I did—I found them rather over my head."

Tim's interest was challenged.

"So did I."

"They were too academic, too rigid, seldom parochial. He preaches now in a more intimate way, less dogma, you know. His themes are very simple. He talks to us in his

quiet, impressive manner about the things which make for happiness or unhappiness in a village. He lays before us the effects of slander, lying, obscenity, and all the subtle forms of intemperance and unkindness. Next Sunday you will hear and understand. I can say to you that he seems to have descended from the heights to walk familiarly amongst us. His influence here is greater than it has ever been. You will judge for yourself of that."

"Lord love you!" said Tim. "Don't I feel it in my bones."

The doctor was a reserved man, no sentimentalist, but he added a few words which impressed Tim:

"I would sacrifice much, Tim, to keep your dear father with us as long as possible. It is a privilege to do him any service."

Similar testimony was forthcoming from Arthur Hazel and Mary Nightingale, unstinted tributes from fellow-workers. And when the time came to take leave of their host, it was Hazel who expressed what was in the hearts of the Vicar's guests.

"We have met here," he said, "for a very special purpose, to welcome home our Vicar's son after long absence. I speak for all of you when I say that we have hoped and prayed that this happy day might come. For more than thirty years our parson has shared our joys and sorrows. During that long period of time he has given to us ungrudgingly all that such a man could give, never counting the cost to himself. To me he looks ten years younger this afternoon. And what we all feel about this home-coming is hard indeed to put into words, because our affection has been inspired by actions, tender ministrations which can never be forgotten, a debt never to be paid here. Because of this his joy is a real joy to us, the greater because it has been so long deferred. On your behalf I bid Mr. Tim welcome home; and I ask him to believe that his father's happiness is ours, and that we share it wholeheartedly and with deepest thanksgiving."

Those present gazed at Tim and at his father. Everybody expected the Vicar to speak, and what he said upon such occasions was never stereotyped, a few words simply chosen and as simply spoken.

He took Tim's arm, and advanced a few steps, so that they stood together facing a semi-circle of men and women. One may hazard the conjecture that none of those present, except Tim, had ever beheld the Vicar not master of himself. When his sympathy had flowed most abundantly towards some stricken soul, he remained calm, always a serene example of fortitude and patience, infusing his strength into weakness.

He remained silent.

Everybody understood that he was too moved to speak. He smiled as his dimmed glance travelled from one face to another; but his quivering lips refused their office. He pressed Tim's arm. Tim spoke for him.

"My father's silence," he said gravely, "answers Mr. Hazel as he would, I fancy, wish to be answered, for behind it is the assurance that his affection for all of you is too deep for words. I thank you for him, and I will add this for myself: I have thought over this homecoming a thousand times, and I have wondered how I should feel when I stood once more amongst the friends of my childhood with my dear father standing beside me. Well, it has been a wonderful experience, a memory which I shall carry with me to my grave. I have wandered far from you, and I feared that I must have drifted as far from your remembrance of me. I know that my father has kept that remembrance alive, and in thanking you for this welcome I thank him with all my heart. If there be anything in me deserving of your affection I owe it to him. While I live I shall regret bitterly that this homecoming was delayed so long. It means far more to me than either he or you will ever know."

CHAPTER IV

RECONSTRUCTION

I

NEXT day Tim walked alone through Pennington High Wood till he came to the poet's cathedral. The beeches were in full leaf. The wonderful freshness and translucency of the foliage caught at his fancy and held it captive. His last visit had been in November, when days were dun and drear.

He threw himself down upon the soft moss.

Passing through Pennington High Wood he had gathered a few primroses and violets to send to Daffy; and he had found a woodpecker's nest in the same hole from which long ago Journey and he had extracted two milk-white eggs with a long spoon. In the glades some brimstone butterflies were flitting here and there in the sunshine. Tim remembered what keen pleasure the collecting of eggs and butterflies had been; and he wondered whether he could renew his youth in the pursuit of pleasures so Arcadian and so simple. Jack was a collector, and something of a naturalist.

He had come to the cathedral to purge his mind of a passion which could never be gratified. It still gripped him unmercifully, so much so that he trembled with excitement when he recalled the look upon Daffy's face, its sweet relaxation, as they stood together upon the Pointe du Raz.

But he faced the issues honestly. The Vicar stood between him and the woman he loved. To gain her he would have to trample upon his spiritual father. And that meant the loss of his self-respect and hers. Such an act might

kill the Vicar. Argue how he might, this fact was incontestably established. A man might be a moral idiot according to Christian ethics, but if he were considering nothing except his own happiness, would not such happiness be imperilled tremendously were it achieved, if but for a brief season, at the expense of others? Daffy had known him better than he had known himself. To think of her except as a faithful friend was an offence against decency and humanity.

Travelling round and round a vicious circle, he returned always to this point, the impossibility of inflicting such a wound upon a man who had shouldered his burdens, and borne them in silence during sixteen years.

He gazed upward at the over-arching boughs. Upon this very spot he had entreated Omnipotence to descend from heaven to talk with him. And he had believed fervently that Omnipotence would come, that Personal God whom he had imagined as sitting upon a great golden throne, surrounded by angels and archangels, listening eternally to their glad hosannas. And when nothing happened, the first doubt had crept into his mind.

What did life without Daffy mean?

He knew that all the myriads who have loved and lost must have asked this question and answered it according to the lights burning within them.

What lights burned within him?

Let him consider, dispassionately if it were possible, the claims of the spirit as opposed to the claims of the flesh. Where and when they worked harmoniously together, the very angels in heaven might envy such a partnership. He did not doubt that. Never could he accept the idiotic teaching of the Early Fathers, their abasement of Woman, their futile counsels of celibacy. To maintain, as St. Paul did, that the single life was best meant the negation of life itself and its continuance. Tim was as sure of this as a man can be. His married life sealed the conviction. Nevertheless, considering flesh and spirit apart, each in

its particular manifestations, could he tabulate results, set them down in his own mind, and arrive at some definite conclusion concerning them? He selected two typical cases—Ivy Jellicoe and the Vicar. Ivy was almost wholly animal; the Vicar might be regarded as a saint. Ivy's nature had made her neglect her child and driven her to a life of shame. The Vicar's nature had impelled him as irresistibly to adopt Ivy's child and to labour unceasingly for the welfare of others. Apart from creeds and standards, considering the benefit to the human race alone, with no thought of a hereafter, was it the flesh of Ivy or the spirit of the Vicar which had triumphed? A child could answer such an absurd question.

And leaving others alone, concentrating his intelligence upon his own experience, had the gratification of fleshly desires brought him any happiness commensurate with the pure joys which are spiritual?

He wrestled with this eternal problem. The answer depends entirely upon the nature of the man who asks it. The animal man says "Yes" at once; the saints and prophets thunder out a "No" as positive, while men such as Tim stand at the cross roads and gaze down each, straining their eyes to behold whither they lead. So it has ever been, and so it must be till the end.

"I must go back a little," thought Tim.

With his imagination and memory such a journey into the past was easy. He saw himself as a boy, with no obscuring mists, with none of that self-absorbment so natural to youth, which dims a vision of themselves as others see them. How thanklessly he had accepted all that the Vicar had given to him, time—long hours after his own work was done devoted to teaching Latin and mathematics—money—generous gifts out of a slender purse—and a love and tenderness that never failed.

Was he prepared to do half as much for Jack?

With what writhings and torment of conscience he computed these mere beginnings of his debt to another.

II

He left the cathedral a very unhappy man, with civil war raging in his heart, but conscious that the victory in the end would not be to the flesh. Two duties had to be accomplished: he must see Daffy, and he must acknowledge his son, tell his wretched story once more to the person most concerned, the joyous, innocent youth.

But a duty far more difficult and likely to prove much more grievous and harassing imposed itself first.

He must find out what had become of Ivy.

That afternoon he walked to Lanterton, passing through the pretty coppice where he had met Ivy for the last time. It was carpeted with primroses; the bracken was beginning to unfold its fronds; the oaks, later than the beeches, exhibited a russet tint of foliage, still shewing their branches finely articulated against a blue sky.

Tim knew that John Jellicoe was alive and living in the same cottage. From a tavern-keeper at Lanterton he learned also that Jellicoe was likely to be working in his garden.

He approached the cottage. It presented a somewhat dilapidated appearance like all the other cottages in this village of unsavoury reputation. A stranger might have divined that the landlord was of those who afford object-lessons to demagogues striving to set class against class. Loafers hung about the three taverns; the cottage gardens were ill-cared for; gates and palings were rotten with age; thatched roofs were covered with damp moss and lichen, picturesque to the eye of an artist, but eloquent to Tim of miserable conditions beneath.

In the Jellicoe garden an old man was sitting upon a stool, smoking his pipe and staring at a row of hives, counting, possibly, May swarms which might be the equivalent of much ale and tobacco.

"Yes, I be Jack Jellicoe; who be you?"

This was Ivy's father; Jack's grandfather, much changed from the once stalwart, handsome poacher; still defiant in voice and manner, obviously a ne'er-do-well.

"I am Timothy White."

The old man stared at him sullenly. For the moment the name conveyed nothing. Tim passed through a wicket-gate, and stood beside him. The old man remained seated, looking up at Tim, blinking and frowning.

"I got your girl Ivy into trouble."

"Ah! I mind that. So 'ee did, so 'ee did." He laughed coarsely. "Many a year ago that was, to be sure! I mind me comin' home, comin' out o' gaol, yes, and my old missis tellin' me the tale. And bright an' early next day I marches over to Little Pennington. They had the law o' me, damn 'em! for snarin' a few hares; and I meant to have the law of 'ee for poachin' in my preserves! Haw! Haw! But t' parson played the man. Yes; he did. I'll say that for 'un. He paid up fair an' square. Now, Mister Timothy White, what be you wantin' rakin' up things as was settled years and years ago?"

He stood up, a gaunt, fierce old man, staring derisively into Tim's face.

"Where is Ivy, Mr. Jellicoe?"

"Haw! Why should I tell 'ee, if I knawed," he added slyly. "The baggage went away from here, takin' her trouble with her. She never come back. Not likely."

Tim said quietly:

"I will make it worth your while to tell me where Ivy is now, if you know."

Jack Jellicoe scratched his head; he licked thirsty lips; then he replied grimly:

"She be gone to hell."

Tim winced; and the man saw it.

"Did 'ee hope to hear she was in heaven?"

"I want to help your daughter if I can."

"Sit 'ee down, sir. I'll be back afore the sun touches yon cloud."

Without another word, he shambled into the house. Tim heard his raucous voice calling: "Mother, mother!" He remembered his last visit, when Ivy's mother lay desperately ill. Evidently she was still alive. Voices were heard, the growl of the man, the shrill, querulous tones of the woman. Tim was unable to catch the sense of what they were saying. He wondered whether the mother's heart held any tenderness for the child who had never come back.

Presently, Jellicoe returned. His face had a smug, sly civility harder to endure than his previous defiance and insolence.

"I beg pardon if I was rough to 'ee."

"That is of no consequence."

"What be this information worth, sir, if I may make so bold?"

Tim endeavoured to hide his disgust. Jellicoe reminded him of Ginty; he could handle such rascals.

"Tell me where I can find your daughter, and I'll give you five pounds, neither more nor less, but I must find her first. If you try to bargain with me, I'll deal with your wife instead of with you."

Jellicoe, with a lively recollection of dealings with magistrates, recognised an ultimatum. He said cringingly:

"A thick 'un on account, sir."

"No."

"'Arf a thick 'un then; we be terrible pore folk, sir."

Tim gave him half a sovereign.

"She be in London town, sir."

"Her mother has her address?"

"She be in a 'orsepital, pore girl. Not for the first time, neither."

Tim wrote down the name of the hospital, eliciting a few more details. Ivy, it seemed, had written to her mother from time to time. Tim guessed that she had sent home a little money. Mrs. Jellicoe had sent in return new-laid eggs. That was all.

Tim returned to the Vicarage by road. He had no stom-

ach for primroses and violets. In his nostrils was the odour of disinfectants. He remembered the all-pervading smell of carbolic acid in the California Woman's Hospital.

III

He travelled to London upon the morrow. At Waterloo, upon a bookstall, he saw "Dust," with a tag attached to it: *Absorbing Novel by a New Writer!* And, in the train, he read in a morning paper another flattering notice of his book, and the reviewer's assurance that he had "come to stay."

To stay—for what?

Under ordinary circumstances, London would have challenged and engrossed his attention, but for the moment he could only think of the world's capital as holding two women—Daffy and Ivy. Lady Rokeby had returned to Rokeby House for the season; Ivy was lying in a hospital.

The hospital was in Hammersmith. Tim sent in his card to the house-surgeon, a tall, curt, overworked young man, who had no time to waste in idle talk. From his lips Tim heard the stark truth. The woman Jellicoe lay in the Bertha Dawson ward, a ward added to the hospital through the generosity of a certain Miss Dawson who had devoted her life and fortune to ameliorating the conditions of women well-named "unfortunate." Tim could see her, although it was not a visitors' day. Recover? Oh, yes, if you could call it that. She would be leaving the hospital in a few days, and—the young man shrugged his shoulders.

Tim followed a porter down a long, cool corridor, and up a flight of well-scoured stone steps. There the porter left him with a nurse. The nurse and he entered the ward together. It was lofty, admirably ventilated, with narrow beds upon each side, and tables in the middle covered with flowers. The nurse said proudly: "You must

look at our flowers, sir. This is the prettiest ward in the hospital."

Tim looked at the faces upon the pillows. Many of the women were young, some were very pretty. Perhaps the prevailing characteristic was a look of weakness and fatigue dominated by a strange contentment.

"This," said the nurse, "is Jellicoe."

At first glance, Tim failed to recognise her. She was lying quite still, not asleep, but with eyes closed. Her lashes, long but not thick, fringed a white, sunken pair of cheeks. The lips were fuller and coarser; the hair, which he remembered so bright and lustrous, had become drab-coloured from the use of dyes. It seemed artificial—dead! Her once plump little body was cruelly thin.

He heard the nurse's pleasant voice:

"A gentleman to see you, Jellicoe."

Ivy opened her eyes, staring indifferently at Tim.

"There's a chair," said the nurse.

Tim sat down as she bustled away.

"Who are you?" asked Ivy. It was a shock to find that her voice had changed; the life had gone out of it.

"You don't recognise me?"

He spoke very gently, almost in a whisper; but she made no sign, evidently searching a memory which must hold many indistinguishable shadows of gentlemen. She said listlessly:

"It was nice of you to come. I'm very comfortable. However did you know as I was here? I suppose Daisy told you. She's been awfully good, that girl. Was Daisy with me when I met you?"

"No. You have not seen me for a long time, Ivy. Can't you remember now?"

Her listlessness was astonishing; curiosity informed it, however.

"I'm bad at names, dear. And so often you don't give the right ones, do you? But I ought to remember your face, because it's so handsome. In the Army, are you?"

"No."

"Never mind! I'm pleased you came. Ain't your eyes blue? Yes; I've seen them before. And—if you laughed——!"

"That would be difficult."

"I remember laughs. I always liked jolly men. I've had my good times. Make me laugh now."

"Ivy, I am Tim White. I have been out of England for seventeen years."

It was horrible, but she laughed, the most mirthless laugh that Tim had ever heard; but she put out her hand and spoke kindly:

"I ought to have known you, Mr. Tim. You ain't changed so very much. Yes; I ought to have known you anywheres. However did you find me?"

"I went over to Lanterton."

"Hateful place."

Each remained silent. Tim held her hand, pressing it, wondering what he could say, trying vainly to read her mind. Her look at him was piteously vacant, but he could discern no hatred in it, only a childish wonder. Childish! He would have said that she was nearly forty, judging by the lines upon her face.

"Why did you want to see me, Mr. Tim? I ain't much to look at now, am I?"

"You've been very ill. Your colour will come back." He intended to withdraw his hand, but she would not let it go; she became more animated—

"You do look fine, so big and strong. Fancy coming here to see me!"

"I came to do what is possible, to help a little, to——"

He was too moved to finish the sentence. Ivy nodded.

"It's all right," she whispered. "We had some rare fun, didn't we? I was happier at the Vicarage than I've ever been since. Wasn't I fond of you just! It all comes back. Mother told you I was here? Yes. She sends me nice country eggs. I let that girl over there have one yester-

day. She promised me another to-day, but it wasn't fresh. Nice trick that, eh?"

She glared at a bed across the ward. Dimly, Tim apprehended that any one who interfered with her comfort aroused resentment.

"You shall have plenty of new-laid eggs and fresh cream every day till you are well again."

She smiled at him, thanking him with effusion. He wondered whether she was thinking of their child. Tentatively, in a low whisper, he asked a question:

"My father looked after you after I ran away?"

"Yes, he did," she answered shortly. "He meant well, but I couldn't stick service again. He got the child into a home. Best thing for it, too. Don't look so glum, Mr. Tim. I was mad with you for getting me into trouble, but I was young and silly, and my people was awful to me. It's all right now. If it hadn't been you, it'd have been somebody else. That's God's truth—so cheer up! I was born—gay. I wanted you more than you wanted me. What a nice, jolly boy you was! Such a dear, till you got to worrying about the silly old future. Bad times come along soon enough! Tell us a funny story. Make me laugh as I used to. Don't pull a long face! What's done can't be helped."

Tim set himself the task of amusing her. That was what she wanted. He told her about his experiences, in the foc'sle of *The Cassandra,* riding a brake-beam, "battering" a meal, his knifing by a Greaser, his escape from Judge Lynch. She listened, absorbed, smiling and nodding her head.

"You had hard times, Mr. Tim. Just like me. That's life. The rough and the smooth. Take it as it comes. Grin and bear it."

When he left her, promising to come again, she thanked him again and again—

"You've cheered me up; yes, you have. And you was the first, Mr. Tim. I liked you best. Daisy tells the same

tale—ancient history with us girls. I wanted a bit o' fun, and I had it. No complaints."

IV

The house-surgeon told him that he could come back any afternoon between two and four. Tim said hesitatingly:

"When she leaves here I should like to do something. Any hint——?"

The young man raised his eyebrows.

"That sort is irreclaimable. She can be cockered up into a sort of health, not the real thing. I give her ten years. They can't exist without excitement."

"Gay?"

"What a word, but it tells the tale."

Tim walked back to his hotel through Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park. He decided that he would buy an annuity for Ivy, enough to keep her from want; from time to time he would see her, whatever her life might be. To the end it was humanly certain that she would prefer chocolates to jobations, fresh eggs to stale advice. To reform her, according to Little Pennington notions, was impossible. Was he likely to succeed where his father had failed?

He could not go straight from Ivy to Daffy, too great a distance lay between the two women. But he wrote to Daffy, telling her that he was in London, and that he would call at ten in the morning upon the day following.

Rokeby House occupies a corner of Belgrave Square, standing austerely by itself, with a garden behind. Time was when Tim would have liked to live in a stately mansion. All such ambition had passed from him. The mere thought of filling such a house with chattering guests inspired disgust.

Nevertheless, he was impressed when he mounted a great

white-marble staircase, with a balustrade which had come from a doge's palace in Venice. And at the end of a lovely saloon, hung with French tapestries, Daffy stood waiting for him with her enigmatical smile upon her lips. Her first words, when they found themselves alone, struck him as perfectly chosen:

"We remain faithful friends."

"Yes," he replied calmly.

Friendship suffused itself from her, encompassing her gracious figure with an aura. Words were unnecessary; she understood what he felt, what he had undergone, what he must still undergo. She stood before him, ready to help, with eyes softened by sympathy and brightened by hope. She whispered:

"You have not shrunk, Tim."

That was true, at any rate. A larger view of life had expanded him. Since he had parted from her he had been constrained to think of others. If life was to be worth the living, he must tread humbly the narrow path, not the broad and easy way. Daffy would walk beside him.

The delightful sense of intimacy, which he always experienced in her company, enabled him to tell her simply what had passed. At the end she said:

"Then the boy doesn't know?"

"Not yet."

"It will be easy to tell him now."

"He may loathe me."

"Have no fear of that. You will live to be proud of him; and he will live to be proud of you."

She spoke tranquilly, with comforting conviction.

"And you, Daffy?"

He leaned forward, challenging her glance. Had she betrayed a sign of weakness, passion might have swept the pair of them to the bottomless pit. She was prepared for the question.

"Alice and I came through Dinard on our way home."

"Dinard?"

"I saw Sir Harry Jocelyn, and the lady who shares his exile. Did I tell you that I knew her before she went away with him? No. Well, I remember telling you that her husband refused to divorce her. She calls herself Lady Jocelyn. Even in Dinard there are many women who won't meet her. Harry is devoted, poor fellow, but he confessed to me that golf was their principal distraction and occupation."

"The common round, then, doesn't furnish all they have to ask?"

"They are miserably unhappy. I would have shut my eyes to that, if I could. You and I, Tim, can throw no stones at them. And in their particular case, they had no one to consider except themselves. Yet it has turned out disastrously. Time must make things harder for each of them. I have had them in my mind ever since."

"But you would have come to me, Daffy, if I had insisted and gone on insisting?"

"I don't know. Perhaps. Your want of me might have overpowered judgment, instinct, everything. Most women are like that, and fortunately few men know it. If there had been nothing left in all the world for you but me, I feel that I might have come to you, and together we should have sunk, Tim, to depth beyond depth, because I am I and you are you. The Little Pennington influence has been too great for each of us. That is why I sent you back to your father. Oh, Tim, I must let you see my heart to-day, even as I seem to see yours. Happiness may not be for us. It is so elusive at best. Those who seek it most unwearyingly are those who never find it. I doubt if it is ever found at the expense of others, save, perhaps, by men and women who are little higher than the beasts of the field. Peace remains, Tim, and a share in the happiness which flows from others. You have your son, your father, and your work. I believe that your work will help you and others. You will put into it what you have felt,

the enduring beauty of things; you will fight on the side of the angels, and it will be well with you."

"I hope so," he said humbly.

He told her about his visit to the hospital, and repeated what the doctor had said. Upon this unhappy subject Daffy knew far more than he did; she had met Miss Dawson, had worked with her and for her.

Daffy said sadly: "Are you going to tell Jack about his mother?"

"No; I'm not. I simply can't."

"It is for you to decide, but I think you are right."

"She has forgotten him, poor soul! as I did. With greater excuse, too. Her only friend appears to be a girl called Daisy. I must see her and arrange something."

"I may be able to find some sort of retreat, some shelter."

Presently he went away, feeling terribly bruised and tired. Like Apollo, he had pursued Daphne; and she had turned herself into a tree. The offer to find shelter brought to his mind the old story. He could see himself, hot and weary, sitting in the cool shade which she provided.

V

That night, at his hotel, he fell a prey to an inevitable reaction. Temperamentally, he was the least morbid of men. Even in his darkest hours, just after Magdalena's death, he had clung to life desperately, furious because Fate had dealt cruelly with him, but with fighting instincts aroused and clamouring for expression. Once, long ago, upon the wet decks of *The Cassandra,* he had been seized with the desire to plunge into the yeasty wake and find oblivion. That, indeed, was the mad impulse of a reckless, unhappy boy, which had passed swiftly.

To-night, the temptation gripped him again, with subtle beguilement. He was afraid of himself, not yet able to reckon the change within him, the new, amazing sense of

self-detachment. His passion for Daffy was dead, and with it seemed to have died other interests and ambitions. The Vicar stood forth as a radiant example of how fine life might be without passion. He knew with a conviction that nothing could shake hereafter that if Daffy and he had elected to ignore consequence, consequence would have been less complaisant to them. Life with her, however sweet for a brief time, would have degenerated into bitterness and remorse; a fine symphony murdered by the performers. Passion was incapable of compromise; it blessed or it blighted.

He reflected ironically that he was indulging himself with catch-penny platitudes.

If he died now, if he sought the long sleep, the merciful oblivion, what a solution of the problem that would be! Such an end could be accomplished without arousing the suspicions of others. To die painlessly, to escape from woes present and future, to refuse the drinking of dregs—the disappointments, the futilities, the crass stupidities of existence—why not? He could provide adequately for Ivy and Jack; and then he could swim out to sea till some kindly current carried him to eternal rest.

CHAPTER V

TWILIGHT

I

THE room assigned to Tim in the huge hotel on the Thames Embankment overlooked the river. Tim sat at his open window watching the twinkling lights upon the Surrey side. At the moment when he was most tempted to escape from himself, he heard the Westminster chimes and then the slow, solemn striking of midnight.

A small thing may change the current of a man's thoughts. But this was no small thing. And it happened, oddly enough, to be a first experience, for he had never paid attention to such sounds before, although he was acutely sensitive to symbolism however it might present itself to his intelligence.

A new day was at hand.

With the realization of this, he undressed and went to bed, but he lay awake listening for the next chime, thinking of the bells of Little Pennington, which had been rung upon the night when he returned home. They, too, echoed in his mind, evoking the memories of innumerable Sundays, when he had obeyed most reluctantly their insistent summons.

The dawn of a new day!

What a miracle it was, this eternal resurrection of the hours, this triumph of the present over the past, this renascence of light and warmth.

He stretched himself, acutely conscious of physical well-being, knowing that he was "fit," in the very prime of manhood. The sharp reflection of the thousands in bodily pain who must be listening to the striking of the hours served

as a tonic; the faces of the women in the B.D. ward floated before him.

"I must stick it out," he thought.

With this determination gathering strength in his mind, he fell asleep. When he woke, the black humours had vanished, he could wonder why he had entertained them. Something new and fresh took their place, as if dew had fallen upon him during the night, as if Spring had touched him with her rosy fingers.

During the morning he called upon Broad, who said that orders were coming in from the big booksellers. Tim read a somewhat drastic criticism of "Dust" which did him no harm, still further quickening his fighting instincts, for the reviewer had picked out all the blemishes and crudities of the novel. Broad said genially:

"The poor devil was bilious. As a rule they're kinder to beginners. Wait till you sell a first edition of ten thousand; then you'll get it."

From Broad's publishing house he walked to the National Gallery, and spent a profitable two hours in front of a dozen masterpieces. The work accomplished by others began to provoke a desire in him to take up his pen again. He had been right to lay down a too facile and ineffective brush.

"Could he work in Little Pennington?"

Time and experience would determine that. The attempt must be made patiently and sincerely. Surely in that peaceful village something would come to him, some emanation from the many lives so interwoven with his own. Hope that it might be so evoked the faith necessary to bring about such a consummation. Such thoughts, flitting in and out of his mind, are recorded because they serve to shew the change in Tim's point of view. Hitherto, his intelligences had been synthetic, essentially imaginative and creative. A tremendous shock had shaken up and disintegrated a too selfish philosophy, compelling him, both consciously and sub-

consciously, to take cognisance of its component parts, to analyse them separately, and then, if he could, to piece them together so that they would present a different pattern.

To an impartial student of psychology, the change in the man, which was most significant, took the form of a profound and humble distrust of himself.

II

He saw Ivy three times before he went back to Little Pennington. During his last visit, he learned that Daffy had come to the hospital bringing with her flowers and an offer of shelter not only for Ivy but for her friend.

"It ain't a Home for the Fallen," explained Ivy. "Me and Daisy couldn't stand that. It's a cottage in the country. We shall just love it for a month. By that time I'll be strong again, and fatter, I hope. Dull, yes; but sweetly pretty. She's a good sort, that Lady Rokeby. Dropped no tracks. My! Ain't I fed up with them. Made me laugh, too, telling me about a dormouse which you gave her when she was a little girl."

"I paid a shilling for it," said Tim.

"She told me that she caught it by the tail, and all the fur come off in her 'and. And then the dormouse ate up what was left of its tail. Ain't that funny?"

She laughed mirthfully.

Nothing she could have said would have indicated more clearly her amazing irresponsibility, her incapacity to take things seriously. She was a child when he parted from her; she would remain childish so long as she lived.

When he took leave of her she cried a little, repeating the old phrase: "Oh, I do like you; you are a dear. It was just sweet of you to hunt me up."

Then, holding her thin hand, he told her that he had bought an annuity for her. If he expected fervent thanks, he was mistaken. She frowned slightly, as she asked:

"Does that mean I'm to be good, to go back to Lanterton?"

"No; it only means that you will have enough to live on, enough to keep you from want."

She smiled again. Tim said desperately:

"Look here, Ivy. God knows I'm not fit to preach to you; I've been through Hell, dear, and I'm not out of it yet. But I believe I shall get out. I'm going home to begin again. Can't you do the same?"

"Go home?" She laughed mockingly.

"I don't mean Lanterton. This friend of yours, Daisy, seems to be fond of you. Couldn't you two start a small shop? Is there no escape from a life which must kill you both?"

She regarded him sourly.

"That sort of talk gives me the hump. Escape? S'pose I don't want to escape? A small shop! I know more about small shops than you do. Why, it's worse drudgery than service. I must have my bit o' fun. There! That's back of everything. Most of us ain't honest enough to own up. But what's the use of my humbuggin' you? I love my freedom—see? I lie here thinking of—what? I told the clergyman who visits here, and he nearly had a fit. He expected me to be howling over my sins. I told him my mind was wandering in the Empire promynade. And so it is. Now you have it. No complaints."

As he was going, she said artlessly:

"Mr. Tim, couldn't you get me a dormouse?"

He promised to provide a dormouse.

III

It was impossible to think of this poor creature as a bad woman, generic title for all such unfortunates in the happy village and even in Lanterton. Bad! That was positive. A "bad" man in California signified one who liked to shoot

first under slight provocation. The Greaser, who slipped a knife into Tim was "bad." Tim bore him no grudge when he looked reflectively—as he did sometimes—at the scar. The Greaser was a wild animal; little Ivy—how small she looked!—was a tame cat, purring when you offered her cream and dormice, shewing her claws when you rubbed her fur the wrong way.

And she was the mother of Jack.

He had to assimilate this fact as best he might, but the results, both in his own case and the boy's, must be deemed something of a triumph for environment and personal influence over heredity.

That night he bared his soul to the Vicar, extenuating nothing in the past, making no pledges for the future. The old man listened with a quiet light in his eyes, saying nothing till Tim had finished.

"I want to stay here with you and Jack. I want to know Jack. I want him to know me. And then I shall tell him that he is my son."

"It will not be difficult, my boy."

They gazed tranquilly at each other. Tim saw that the Vicar was counting his sheaves, the corn that had ripened after long years.

"I am well content, Tim."

It was so; for there is an expression upon some men's faces which can never be feigned, a serenity which is the seal of a fruitful life, of high faith, of a courage that never fails. Beholding this look, Tim tasted for the first time a happiness not his own, a cooling, satisfying draught from the cup of another.

The Vicar added slowly:

"I have prayed that this hour might come. I can go now in peace."

IV

Alone once more, Tim swore to himself that this peace should not be imperilled by any word or act of his. He was beginning again, with an open mind. Three clauses in the Apostles' Creed reëstablished themselves in that mind: the forgiveness of sins, the communion of Saints, and the resurrection of the dead.

The odd whim that he, a nameless man, must adopt some name which fitted him touched again his fancy. He would be known henceforward as Timothy White, and it was the Vicar's wish that Jack, when he learned the truth, should call himself White, but to Tim the pseudonym which he had adopted was that he really felt himself to be. He might be young as men reckon years; he might achieve much; but the fires of youth had at last burnt themselves out.

"Now came still evening on, and twilight grey
Had in her sober livery all things clad."

As he came home across Pennington Park, the grey skies seemed to meet and fuse in the grey landscape; the ponds mirrored a silvery radiance; in the west the sun was sinking behind great banks of clouds; some tall firs were sharply defined against a patch of golden light.

Out of the silence peace descended upon him. Whether it would linger with him or not, he could not say.

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